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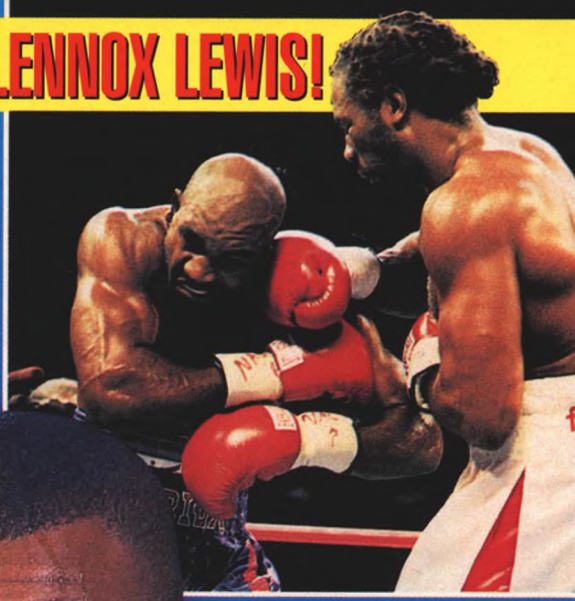

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Joseph Kalman

RINGSIDE

The winds of change are blowing in boxing, not at hurricane force, but hard enough to stir up quite a bit of dust. As I write this in early-June, the government's corruption case against IBF officials continues, President Bill Clinton signed into law the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act a few weeks ago *(see "Bill Signs The Bill," page 9)*, and the Association of American Boxing Commissions is flexing its muscles more and more. How all of this will shake out for the sport in the long run is impossible to predict, but I think it's reasonable to say that things will never be quite the same.

Not even the most starry-eyed optimist thinks that any or all of the above will cure each and every one of boxing's numerous ills. Corruption will never totally disappear from boxing, any more than it will from the rest of the world. Even so, some progress has been made, especially when it comes to keeping a tighter rein on the business practices of promoters, managers, and alphabet organizations.

The Ali Act limits, to one year, the length of the contractual obligation a fighter must give a promoter in order to get a title shot, and that could have a profound effect on the game. Previously, some promoters had tied up fighters for as long as they retained the title—or longer. Not only was this blatantly unfair to the fighters, it indirectly led to a lot of mismatches that we, the boxing consumer, ultimately paid for. That's because when a promoter has a champion in his grasp on virtually a permanent basis, the promoter has all the time he wants to maneuver. Frequently, he'll keep the champ busy in meaningless fights (often of the alphabet mandatory ilk), milking the title for all it's worth, until, maybe, if we're lucky, the promoter finally makes a superbout everybody wants to see.

With only a year to work, promoters will have to concentrate on giving the paying public what it wants as soon as possible. Do you really think Don King would have had Felix Trinidad fighting guys like Kevin Lueshing, Troy Waters, and Mahenge Zulu if he only had 12 months in which to work with the Puerto Rican superstar?

Of course, if a fighter wishes to sign a multi-year contract with a promoter, he'll still be free to do so, but the choice will be his. He'll do it because he wants to, not because he's coerced. But those circumstances aside, the new legal guidelines should result in more good fights on a regular basis. And that, as far as boxing fans are concerned, is the bottom line.

But as I cautioned earlier, it's not yet time to pop the champagne cork and declare the war against corruption over. The Ali Act sets fines of up to $100,000 and/or one year in jail for those who break the law, but the threat of punishment isn't going to deter everybody. The feds are going to have to hit some of these crooks hard in the pocket book or throw their butts in jail before compliance is secured. So things are going to take time. To paraphrase Winston Churchill following the Allies' victory at El Alamein in World War II, "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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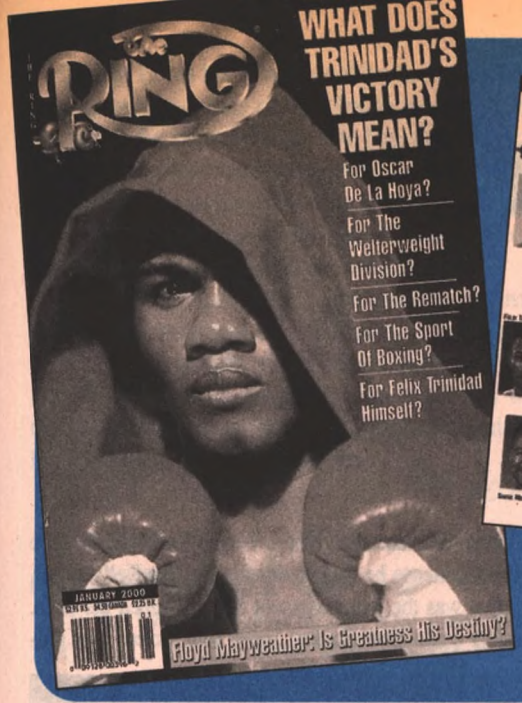

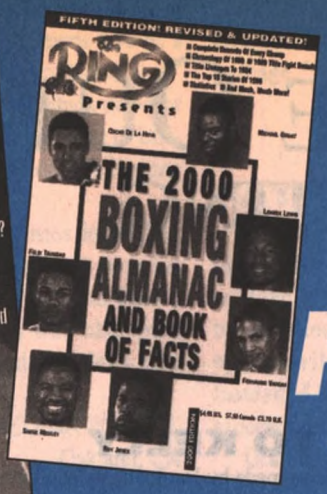

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COME OUT WRITING

We welcome your letters, which may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034

KUDOS TO KELLY

I find the comments made by Jim Lampley and Larry Merchant that referee Wayne Kelly should have stopped the fight between Roy Jones and Richard Hall sooner to be simply ridiculous. Like Kelly stated, Hall was throwing punches, and when he stopped, that was the exact moment Kelly stopped the fight. Didn't Lampley and Merchant realize that Hall possibly could have clocked Jones with a clean shot during an exchange and maybe kayoed him?

That is the beauty of boxing. Countless numbers of great fights have taken place throughout history in which a fighter was taking a beating, only to come back to win the bout. A great example was when Matthew Saad Muhammad won the light heavy title over Marvin Johnson in 1979. Johnson hit Saad with everything but the kitchen sink, only for Saad to come back and kayo Johnson in the eighth.

MICHAEL SABOL
Virginia Beach, VA

VIEWS ON LEWIS

After Lennox Lewis' two-round demolition of Michael Grant, it has become obvious that with the exception of Evander Holyfield, who fought two close but unsuccessful fights with Lewis, there is no one among the current crop of heavyweights able to pose a serious challenge to his reign as champion.

As Lewis has always claimed, with some justification, the boxing world will never give him full credit for his achievements. Might I suggest that he cement his place in boxing history with his own version of Joe Louis' celebrated "Bum Of The Month" campaign.

A year or two of traveling fistic mayhem may not give him much time to relax on Jamaican beaches, and will certainly not please his tax accountant, but at least it will mean that even the unlikely names who end up as number-one contenders to the alphabet boys will get their day in the ring. How about it, Lennox?

KEVIN FORD
North York, Ontario

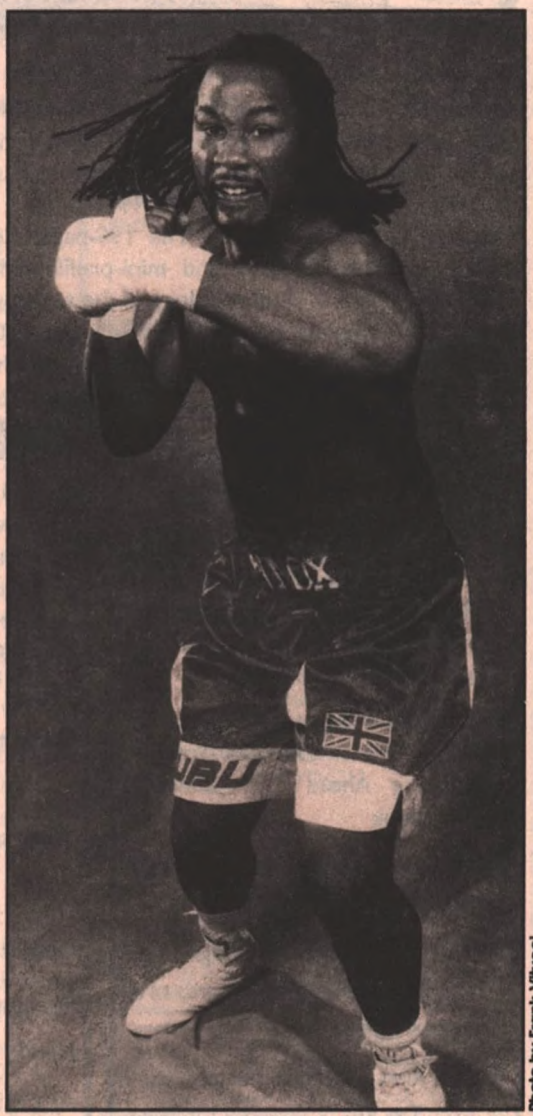


Photo by Frank Vitucci

With no serious threats to his reign, Lennox Lewis should consider taking a fight a month, like Joe Louis used to do. This way, writes Kevin Ford, Lewis has a chance to clean up the division and fulfill his mandatory commitments.

Lennox Lewis has done everything that a man could to earn his belts as well as a little respect, but to me, it still seems like he's not getting the respect that's due to him, especially in America.

For some crazy reason, most Americans are still stuck on Mike Tyson. Why are people stuck on a man who took the sport of boxing to a new all-time low? His behavior inside and outside the ring says to me that he has a serious mental problem.

Lennox has shown true sportsmanship qualities in dealing with unjust treatment by Americans. This man truly won his belts in the first fight with Evander Holyfield, but was denied his victory. He did, however, take it like the true champion that he is. So I say let Tyson fade into the shade and let's give Lennox his big ups from America.

REGINA POWELL
Oakland, CA

SEVEN OUT OF 10

Of the 10 guys picked to kick Roy Jones' butt in the June 2000 issue, I would question Marvin Hagler, Gene Fullmer, and Harold Johnson. Hagler lacked both the hand speed and the big punch needed to beat Jones. This was evident when Duran posed problems for him in '83. Fullmer was at best a rugged brawler, but he too lacked a knockout punch, was prone to cuts, was slow afoot, and had little if any defense. Johnson was a superb boxer, but relied too much on defense. Jones would have outpointed all three.

I do think the power and aggressive style of Dwight Qawi would have posed problems for Jones, possibly leading to a late-round TKO. I also think the awkwardness of Michael Spinks, plus the "Spinks Jinx" right cross, would have been a constant threat.

KURTIS WOLF
Glendale, AZ

SHAME ON SHOWTIME

I watched the so-called *Showtime Championship Boxing* matches from China on April 22, and I won't dare call them fights! Shame on Showtime, the promoters, and the matchmakers. You think judges' decisions give boxing a black eye? At least HBO's *Boxing After Dark* puts on competitive fights. Take for instance Erik Morales vs. Marco Antonio Barrera and Fernando Vargas vs. Ike Quartey. Both are candidates for Fight of the Year. My hat's off to their matchmaker.

I watched Showtime's joke of a fight card at a friend's house, but if I subscribed to Showtime, I can guarantee you that I would have canceled my subscription because their matchmaking is a joke. Shame on Showtime, Jay Larkin, Ferdie Pacheco, Bobby Czyz, Montell Griffin, Andrew Golota, and anyone else involved in this garbage.

MARK FERNANDEZ
Pittsburg, CA

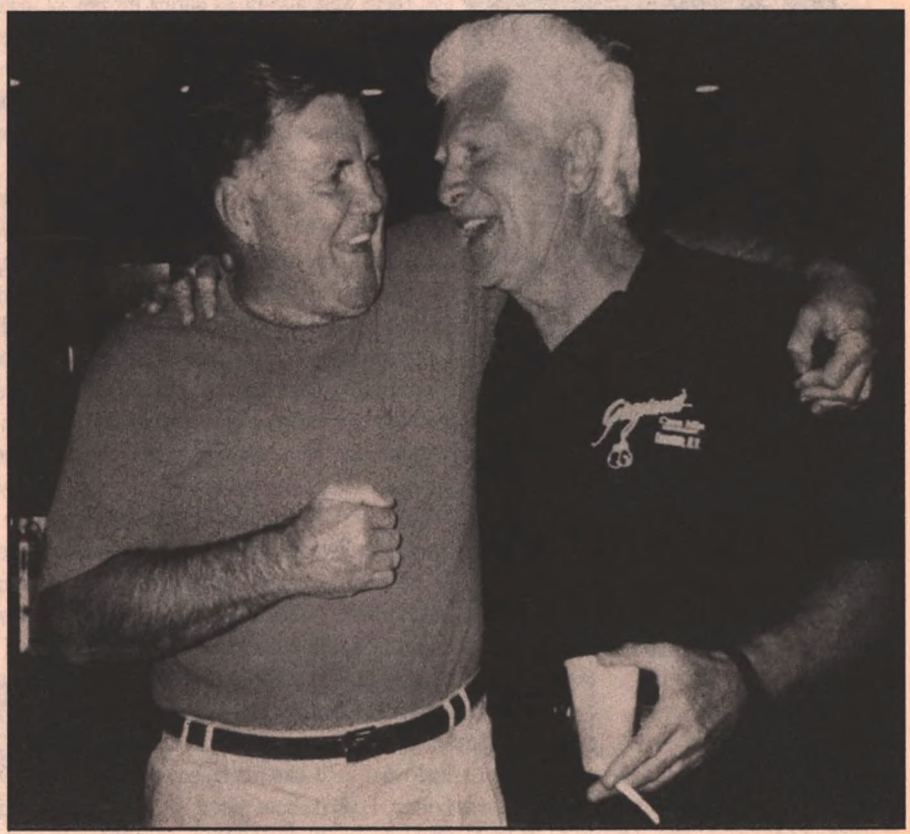
FATHER'S DAY

At the risk of sounding unoriginal, I am tired of the negative light under which the boxing world is constantly represented. I am tired of hearing about crooked promoters, mismatched fights, bad decisions, etc. I get the picture already. It seems to be a necessary evil, so let's not give it more hype than it is worth. Instead, I would like to focus on one of the most significant aspects of the fight world: the boxing fan.

Granted, I may be biased, but the biggest fan I know of is my father. Every year, he makes his trips to the Hall of Fame inaugurations, visiting cities such as Los Angeles, London, and, of course, Canastota, New York. When I asked him why he goes to the same places every year for the same thing, he said it was to support the sport he loved so much. When Jerry Quarry passed on and my father sent a donation to help the bereaved, a kind letter was reciprocated with a photo of Jerry. I am sure these heartfelt acts were greatly appreciated on both sides, and this type of generosity and support is not uncommon in the boxing world.

We need to remember that pugilism is an art. And in art, oftentimes, can be found compassion and humanity.

JOHN TUNNEY
Hayward, CA ■



Boxing has brought many a father and son together, and it seems to be no different between reader John Tunney and his father, who is pictured here with the late Jerry Quarry.

ROUND ONE

A CRUSADER CALLS IT QUITS

Just like the fighters he admires so much, Lou DiBella "gave it everything I had for as long as I could," but finally threw in the towel, resigning from HBO Sports after 11 years in the sports department, the last three as senior vice president. He has been replaced by his former assistant, Kery Davis.

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

DiBella: Leaves HBO after "burning out"

"I was burning out," said the 40-year-old DiBella. "I'll stay in boxing in some capacity, but not to the exclusion of everything else in my life. My job was becoming all-consuming."

DiBella, whose gritty, candid style didn't always meet with approval in the buttoned-down corporate world, became an outspoken advocate for boxing reform and frequently went toe-to-toe with the various alphabet organizations, and sometimes had to fight a multi-front war in order to obtain the sort of programming he felt boxing fans deserve.

"There were times when I felt like Don Quixote tilting at windmills," admitted DiBella.

There were also times during his last 12 months on the job when DiBella felt that his phone might have been tapped and that he was being followed. There were also mysterious phone calls in the middle of the night from anonymous individuals offering protection.

"I was also frustrated by all the criticism about how the network was becoming the promoter," said DiBella. "But if I did get more involved in the matchmaking, the flip side is that we got better fights because of it."

HBO enjoyed the greatest growth in its boxing programming during the DiBella era. When he was hired, the cable network was broadcasting approximately nine fight shows per year. At the time of his departure, HBO, along with TVKO, its pay-per-view arm, was airing closer to 30 boxing cards a year. One of DiBella's finest accomplishments was the creation of *Boxing After Dark*, which has a smaller budget but frequently produced more competitive fights than *Championship Boxing*, the network's boxing flagship.

Despite a law degree from Harvard and a prestigious position with one of the largest corporations in the world, DiBella earned high marks for being both accessible and a regular guy. He always returned reporters' phone calls and inevitably provided juicy quotes, free of the politically correct drivel typically spoken by empty suits in high places. Besides intelligence and hard work, the secret to DiBella's success was that he genuinely loved the Sweet Science and the brave men who participate in it.

"I've had so many fighters call me since the news I was leaving HBO became public," said DiBella. "They all wanted to thank me and wish me good luck. And it wasn't just the big stars like Roy Jones and Oscar De La Hoya. I was in Indianapolis for the Jones-Richard Hall fight, and Angel Manfredy fought on the undercard. After the fight, he cut off his gloves and autographed them for me. He wrote, 'I'll miss you. Thanks for everything you've done for me and my family.' Things like that mean a lot to me."

When asked what he'd like his legacy at HBO to be, DiBella paused for a long time and then said, "I was honest. I cared about the fighters and boxing. I made good fights."

Kery Davis has some mighty big shoes to fill.

—Nigel Collins

BILL SIGNS THE BILL

Bill named after Ali becomes law

The proverbial winds of change have never blown harder through the Sweet Science. After being passed by the House of Representatives in mid-May and signed by President Clinton just a few days later, the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act is now law, and assuming the government is able to enforce the reforms therein, the sport of boxing will never be the same again.

"The Ali Act is not a panacea for the sport, but it will enable professional boxers to resist coercive practices by promoters and curtail the most outrageous practices of the ratings organizations that have preyed on them," said Arizona Senator John McCain, who, along with Nevada Senator Richard Bryan, first introduced the Ali Act three years ago. Representative Michael Oxley of Ohio was the bill's primary backer in the House. Clinton's endorsement was not announced officially for several weeks after he signed the bill (though we support government intervention to clean up boxing, we don't always understand the way they operate), but the news was leaked and announced on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* on June 2.

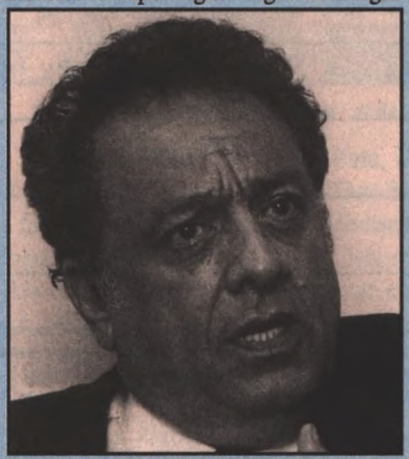
The Ali Act has been examined in detail on these pages in the past, but here is a brief rundown of the key reforms: Contractual rights given up by a fighter to a specific promoter in order to obtain a bout (such as when Evander Holyfield had to sign with Don King in order to fight Mike Tyson in 1996) will be limited to one year; promoters will be required to disclose all contracts and payments to the athletic commission before any event, as well as to the fighters; financial ties between promoters and managers will be prohibited; payments made by promoters or managers to sanctioning bodies will be prohibited; and all sanctioning bodies will be forced to disclose the reasoning behind all of their ratings decisions. Anyone convicted of knowingly violating any provisions of the Ali Act will be subject to up to a year in jail and up to $100,000 in fines. Maybe it's excessively optimistic to believe the Ali Act will be this effective, but wouldn't it be nice if John Ruiz is forever known as the last of the completely undeserving mandatories?

—Eric Raskin

MOVING THE MASSACRE

You knew things were getting desperate down at the WBC office in Mexico City when the organization's president, Jose Sulaiman, played the race card and accused Association of American Boxing Commissions President Greg Sirb of discriminating against Mexicans and "orchestrating a campaign to discredit Julio Cesar Chavez."

The first shot of the Sulaiman-Sirb feud was fired when Sirb sent an open letter to Sulaiman, questioning the merit of the organization's super lightweight title fight between champion Kostya Tszyu and Chavez. Sirb went to great pains in his letter to praise Chavez' past accomplishments, but also wrote that the bout "does not merit the title, *world championship*, and on paper does not appear to be a competitive matchup." He also questioned the WBC's decision to keep Chavez its number-one contender following his loss to Willy Wise in October 1999, and points out that Chavez has not competed at 140 pounds since March '98.



Sulaiman: Accusing Sirb of discrimination

"I have no idea why Sulaiman accused me of being anti-Mexican," said Sirb. "He never called me to discuss it."

Originally, the controversial match was scheduled to be held at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas on July 29, but has since been relocated to Phoenix, Arizona. Some believed that the rigorous physical test that Nevada administers to all fighters over 36 years old (Chavez will be 38 by July 29) chased the fight out of the Silver State. Not so, said Marc Ratner, executive director of the Nevada boxing commission.

"We got a call from the MGM Grand saying that it was withdrawing its request for that date," said Ratner. "It never got as far as listing the medical examinations we wanted Chavez to take."

MGM executive Richard Sturm said the hotel was unavailable on July 29 because of a concert, but the MGM's withdrawal may also have had something to do with the negative press the fight had been getting. With Chavez at least a decade past his prime, and Tszyu probably the hardest puncher in the division, a one-sided beating appeared inevitable.

Also putting the heat on the WBC was the pending implementation of the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act and the public criticism the WBC received from U.S. Senators John McCain and Richard H. Bryan concerning the WBC's interference in the selection of the three judges for the Roy Jones-Richard Hall bout in Indianapolis. Sulaiman must realize that the days of his organization doing damned near as it pleases in this country are numbered. But if Sulaiman thinks he can silence Sirb by making unfounded allegations, he's sorely mistaken.

"I've decided to take an even more pro-active role," said Sirb. "I have to start commenting on the ratings."

—Nigel Collins

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
5-19-00	Mia St. John W 4 Fran Alcantar	ESPN2	l	F	C+	D
Playboy Mansion fitting setting for St. John, who would have looked better serving drinks at ringside						
5-19-00	Butterbean KO 1 Bill Johnson	ESPN2	h	F	D-	F
Wanted: clumsy white guys who can't fight a lick; no experience necessary						
5-19-00	Ron Johnson W 4 Cleveland Corder	ESPN2	jm	C-	B+	C+
Score one for the judges; undefeated Corder outfought fair and square by solid journeyman						
5-19-00	Vassiliy Jirov KO 2 Esteban Pizarro	ESPN2	c	C+	D-	C
Jirov crushes unknown Pizarro in non-title go, calls for Roy Jones						
5-20-00	**Felix Machado D 12 Julio Gamboa**	**Show**	**IBF jb**	**B+**	**A-**	**B+**
Machado puts on superb boxing display only to get robbed; rematch likely						
5-20-00	**William Joppy KO 1 Rito Ruvalcaba**	**Show**	**WBA m**	**A-**	**D-**	**B-**
Anyone else think Joppy may be starting to pull even with Bernard Hopkins?						
5-20-00	Hasim Rahman KO 7 Corrie Sanders	HBO	h	B	B+	A
Nothing's better than a pair of hard-hitting, soft-chinned heavyweights						
5-20-00	Oleg Maskaev KO 4 Derrick Jefferson	HBO	h	B+	B+	C+
Can Maskaev bang or what? He hit Jefferson so hard on the jaw he broke his ankle						
5-21-00	**Joel Casamayor KO 5 Jongkwon Baek**	**FOXSN**	**WBA jl**	**A**	**A-**	**B**
America Presents finally gets a break as Casamayor shines in title win						
5-26-00	Angel Vazquez KO 2 Jose Pantaleon	ESPN2	f	B-	D-	C+
Outside of "The Prince," Vazquez may be hardest-hitting feather on the planet						
5-26-00	Demetrius Hopkins KO 2 William Butler	ESPN2	l	C-	C	C
The Executioner's nephew looks solid in pro debut against willing opponent						
5-26-00	Jermaine Fields W 6 Ruben Nevarez	ESPN2	jw	C	B	B-
Fields' energy and strength too much for tough but outgunned Nevarez						
5-26-00	Thomas Tate KO 5 Anthony Andrews	ESPN2	sm	B-	C-	B
Tate steps it up after getting cut, flattens Andrews with right hands						
6-2-00	Billy Irwin KO 6 Miguel Arrozal	ESPN2	l	C+	D	C+
Irwin's left hooks too much for Arrozal; is Spadafora next?						
6-2-00	Miguel Figueroa KO 1 Norberto Frias	ESPN2	jw	C-	B+	C
Hard-hitting Figueroa blitzes Frias with right hands, scores quick knockout						
6-2-00	Volodymyr Matkivsky W 6 Adam Salas	ESPN2	jw	D	A-	C+
*What is this, **Friday Night Fights** or an evening with Fyodor Dostoevsky?*						
6-2-00	Omar Sheika W 10 Glen Johnson	ESPN2	sm	B	A-	B+
Okay, so maybe Sheika can fight a bit; good win over solid fringe contender						
6-3-00	Ben Tackie KO 10 Roberto Garcia	Show	l	B+	B+	A-
Upset! Behind on every card, Tackie starches Garcia with left hook in final round						
6-3-00	David Tua KO 1 Obed Sullivan	Show	h	A	C	D
Pity Sullivan; years from now he'll look back on this and regret that he folded so willingly						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Tel—Telemundo

IRVING RUDD, 1918-2000

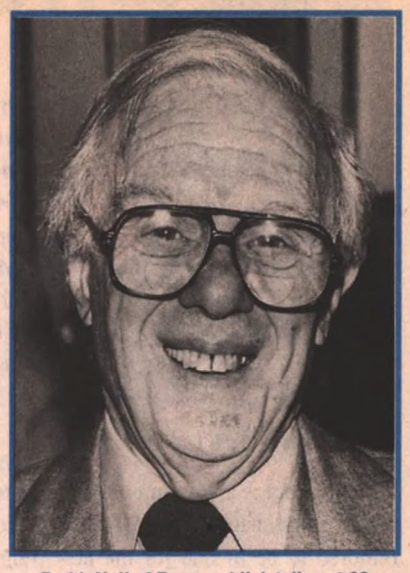
By the time I got to know him in the late-1970s, Irving Rudd looked a little bit like the Mad Hatter from *Alice In Wonderland*. He had longish white hair, a twinkle in his eyes, and always seemed to be scurrying from place to place, handling at least a dozen duties at the same time. But Rudd was no harebrained eccentric. In fact, he had one of the sharpest minds in boxing, a press agent who created some of the cleverest publicity gimmicks in the history of sports marketing.

Although associated with boxing more than any other sport, Rudd was also promotional director for the Brooklyn Dodgers and Yonkers Raceway. It was just before opening day of the racetrack in '58 that Rudd came up with one of his most famous ploys. He instructed a painter to misspell the track's name in three-foot high letters, 80 feet across—"Yonkers Racewya." What looked like a blunder to most was actually a stroke of brilliance that resulted in photographs of the sign appearing in newspapers around the world.

A native of Brooklyn's Brownsville section, Rudd's first boxing job was writing press releases for shows at Rockland Palace in 1937. By the time he retired in '91, he'd worked with virtually every big-name fighter in the world, including Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvin Hagler, and Thomas Hearns. He banged the ballyhoo drums for Don King and Madison Square Garden, finally joining Top Rank in 1977, where he stayed until ill health forced him to the sidelines.

Rudd, who passed away at age 82 on June 2, was a beloved figure and a friend to practically everyone in boxing, especially the fighters. He was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in '99.

"Irving Rudd was a genius," said Bob Arum. "There will never be another like him."



Rudd: Hall of Fame publicist dies at 82

Readers interested in a more detailed account of Rudd's colorful life should try to find a copy of his autobiography, *The Sporting Life*.

—Nigel Collins

HEAVYWEIGHT EROSION

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Oliver pounds Kiser in "main event" of Bottjer's nightmare card

In the July 2000 issue of THE RING, we ran a story by Eric Bottjer entitled "So You Think It's Easy Being A Matchmaker?", a first-hand account of the myriad tribulations he endured putting together a fight card for Cedric Kushner Productions in mid-February. But that was just an average couple of weeks on the job. Shortly after that magazine hit the newsstands, Bottjer suffered through a show so frustrating that it makes you wonder if there's a harder job in the world than the one he has.

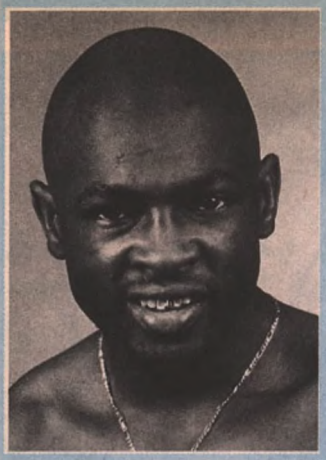
All the switcheroos and drop-outs on CKP's May 17 "Heavyweight Explosion" show at the Hammerstein Ballroom in Manhattan made the evolution of this fight card tougher to follow than watching one of the *Mission: Impossible* movies in fast-forward. The original main event was Alexander Zolkin vs. Calvin Lampkin, but Lampkin pulled out with Hepatitis C. In came Jimmy Thunder, who had dropped off a Kushner show a month earlier claiming an Achilles tendon injury. Somehow he was "healed" in time for this fight, only to back out again shortly after the fight was made. Up stepped Eliecer Castillo—until it was discovered that he had spent four days in jail the week before and wasn't in shape. So finally, Maurice Harris was brought in—the best of all the various scheduled opponents—but three days before the show, Zolkin was scratched with a serious elbow injury. So there was no real main event.

The top two co-features, Jameel McCline vs. Sherman Williams and Jason Robinson vs. David Washington, both fell out as well, and only Robinson ended up on the card (against journeyman extraordinaire Marion Wilson, who took the fight on about 18 hours notice). It got so ridiculous that a cruiserweight eight-rounder between Kelly Oliver and John Kiser became the headliner for an event centered around heavyweights. But the show was still entertaining, and, according to Bottjer, none of the fans went home complaining.

"The crowds at these shows in New York just come to hang out," Bottjer said, "and half of these guys don't know who the fighters are anyway. It was a passable show. But from my perspective, it's something you never want to go through. Trying to keep the show together, I just didn't feel human for a few days."

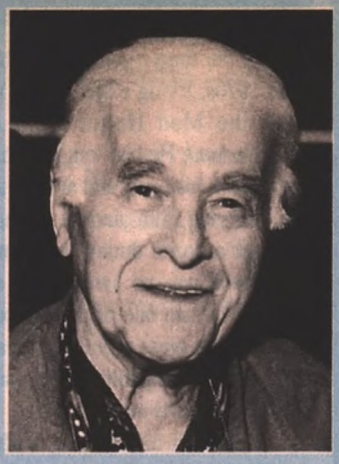
—Eric Raskin

OUTSIDE THE ROPES



Norwood: In a li'l trouble

After a dinner meeting intended to mend fences nearly erupted into a fist-fight, WBC super featherweight champion **Floyd Mayweather** and his father, **Floyd Sr.**, have parted ways, leaving "Pretty Boy" without a head trainer. The mid-May meeting was arranged by the younger Mayweather's new manager, **James Prince**, and his promoter, **Bob Arum**, but it didn't take long before the Mayweathers began arguing. "Respect is a very important thing to me, and he is showing no respect to anyone," reflected Floyd Sr. Among those rumored to be in line for the new trainer position are uncle **Roger Mayweather**, who trained Floyd earlier in his career, and Hall of Famer **Emanuel Steward** ... WBA featherweight champ **Fred Norwood** was arrested in late-May upon returning to the U.S. after making a successful title defense in Argentina. As of press time, Norwood was being held at Tarrant County Jail in Fort Worth, Texas, due to a pair of outstanding warrants. "Li'l Hagler" is facing a kidnapping charge in Las Vegas, as well as an assault charge stemming from a freeway altercation in California. Attorney **Marc Risman** told *USA Today's* **Dan Rafael**, "Freddie let some legal affairs slip through the cracks. He didn't take care of some business he was strongly advised to take care of" ... Also in trouble with the law is top middleweight contender **Antwun Echols**, who faces a felony robbery charge for allegedly hitting a man with a trash can at a Davenport, Iowa, bus terminal and robbing him of $650. Echols, who has been jailed twice in the past, said that he was retrieving money that had been stolen from his cousin and that he and three friends were merely holding the man down until police arrived ... British promoter **Frank Warren** was cleared in mid-May of avoiding $1.8-million in taxes, though his former partner, **Chris Roberts**, was found guilty and was awaiting sentencing as of press time ... While Hall of Famer **Irving Rudd** was the most prominent boxing figure to pass away this month, there are several other deaths to report: Ring announcer **Frank Shain**, whose wife, **Eva**, a boxing judge, died last August, passed on in late-May; former Spanish heavyweight champion **Felipe "Pantera" Rodriguez**, 27-9-5 (13), died of cancer in late-May at age 46; and one-time Welsh heavyweight hopeful **David Pearce**, 17-4-1 (13), died in late-May at the age of 41 after a battle with Alzheimer's Disease.



Shain: Ring announcer dies

THE PUNCHLINES

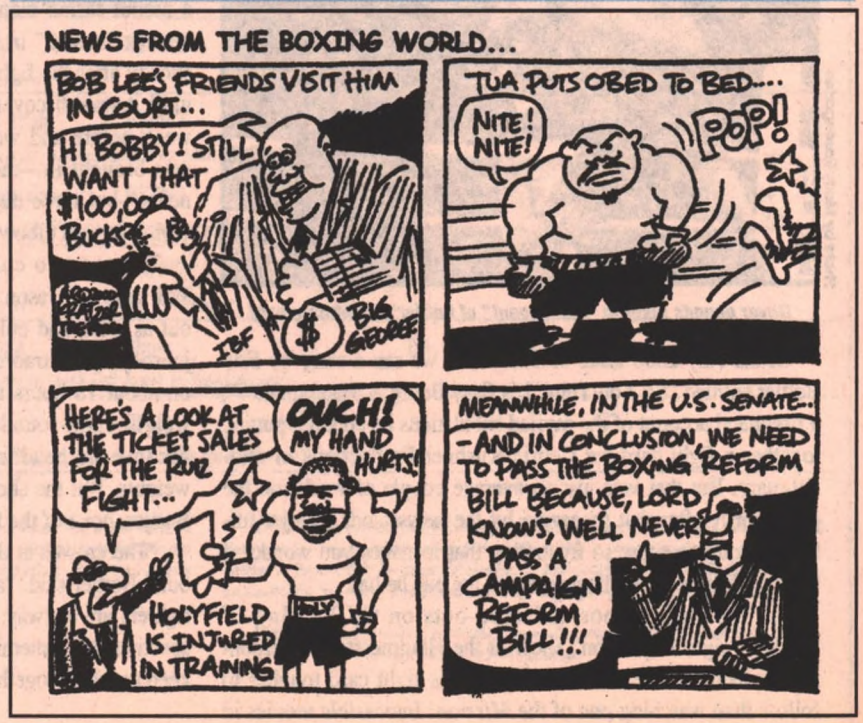
"None of the half-dozen bouts were title fights, but then, belts never have been a popular fashion item at Hef's house."

—*Sports Illustrated's* John Walters, on the May 19 ESPN2 card held at the Playboy Mansion

"Like the sweat on his body, I will be so close to Roy Jones Jr. he will think I'm part of his ring gear."

—Bernard Hopkins, on the pressure he would put on Jones if they were to fight again

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended June 6, 2000)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **ROY JONES**
   Light Heavyweight
2. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Junior Middleweight
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Welterweight
4. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Junior Lightweight
5. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Welterweight
6. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Junior Bantamweight
7. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Junior Flyweight
8. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Middleweight
9. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Lightweight
10. **NASEEM HAMED**
    Featherweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Moving third-ranked David Tua into the number-two position, and dropping Evander Holyfield to third, was debated. But the fact that Tua has been fighting nothing but journeymen since his tainted kayo of Hasim Rahman in December 1998, while Holyfield has been 24 rounds with Lennox Lewis—some observers even thought "The Real Deal" deserved the nod in their second fight—compels the editorial staff to maintain the status quo.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Thomas Tate (seventh last issue) blasted out Anthony Andrews and moves up to sixth, while Byron Mitchell, who hasn't won a fight in a year, slips to seventh. Former WBA titlist Frankie Liles (currently number nine) has not fought since losing the title to Mitchell in June '99, and will be dropped for inactivity if he doesn't return to action in the very near future.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Former WBC champ Keith Mullings, who hasn't fought since losing to David Reid in August '99, falls from eighth to 10th due to his lack of activity. This pushes up Bronco McKart (ninth last issue) and Tony Marshall (10th last issue) to eighth and ninth, respectively.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Ben Tackie's spectacular, come-from-behind kayo of former IBF junior lightweight champion Roberto Garcia was good enough to land the previously unranked African in the 10th spot. Victoriano Sosa exits to make room.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Following his devastating loss to Tackie, Garcia said he would return to the 130-pound division. Therefore, he remains among the junior lights, but plunges from fourth to 10th.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Fred Norwood's 12-round decision over Julio Pablo Chacon in Chacon's native Argentina was good enough for the WBA titlist to retain the number-two spot. Chacon (seventh last issue) departs, pushing Manuel Medina, Mbulelo Botile, and Juan Carlos Ramirez up one slot each. Back again at number 10 is undefeated Angel Vazquez, who is currently fighting on a much more regular basis than before. Though he didn't quite crack the ratings, keep an eye on undefeated South African Cassius Baloyi, who recently blasted out Hector Lizarraga in one round and is probably just one significant win away from the top 10.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Baby Jake Matlala (seventh last issue) is now fighting as a full-fledged flyweight and is therefore gone from the 108-pound ranks. Melchor Cob-Castro (eighth last issue), Will Grigsby (ninth last issue), and Jorge Arce (previously 10th) all move up one spot. Hidenobu Honda of Japan debuts at 10th.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND: No changes. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended June 6, 2000

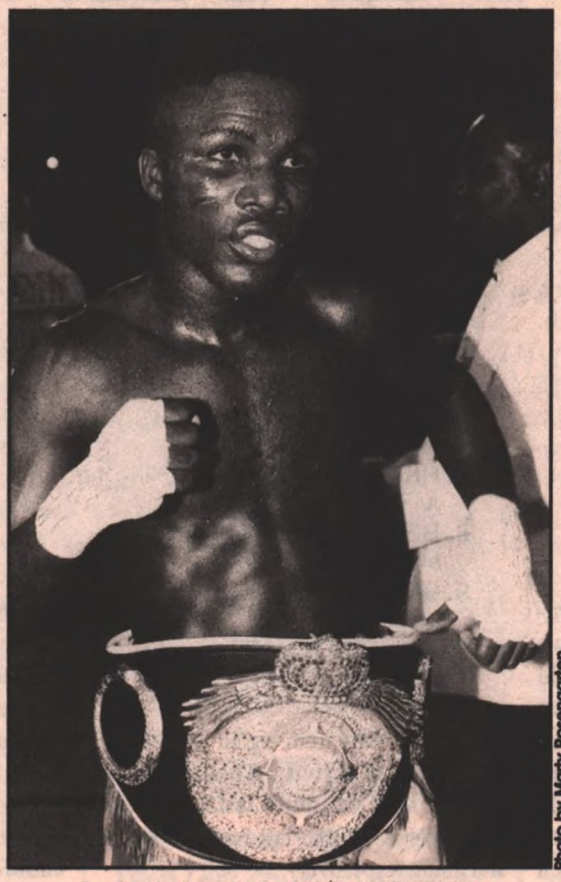


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Ben Tackie debuts in the 10th spot at lightweight

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

In each division, fighters are ranked according to their abilities and accomplishments.

Being champion does not necessarily mean a fighter will be rated at the top of his weight class.

These ratings reflect how the best fighters in the world rate against one another.

Ratings By The Editors

Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

1. **LENNOX LEWIS** England 36-1-1 (WBC/IBF Champ)
2. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD** Fairburn, GA 36-4-1
3. **DAVID TUA** Totowa, NJ 36-1
4. **OLEG MASKAEV** Staten Island, NY 20-2
5. **MIKE TYSON** Catskill, NY 47-3
6. **MICHAEL GRANT** Norristown, PA 31-1
7. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 31-1
8. **ANDREW GOLOTA** Chicago, IL 35-4
9. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD 33-2
10. **DAVID IZON** Pensacola, FL 26-3

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

1. **FELIX TRINIDAD** Puerto Rico 37-0 (WBA Champ)
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 19-0 (IBF Champ)
3. **DAVID REID** Philadelphia, PA 14-1
4. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 34-2-1
5. **FRANCISCO CASTILLEJO** Spain 49-4 (WBC Champ)
6. **HARRY SIMON** Namibia 19-0
7. **WINKY WRIGHT** St. Petersburg, FL 39-3
8. **BRONCO McKART** Monroe, MI 41-2
9. **TONY MARSHALL** Albany, NY 34-7-6
10. **KEITH MULLINGS** Brooklyn, NY 16-6-1

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

1. **NASEEM HAMED** England 34-0
2. **FRED NORWOOD** St. Louis, MO 37-0-1 (WBA Champ)
3. **PAUL INGLE** England 23-1 (IBF Champ)
4. **GUTY ESPADAS** Mexico 32-2 (WBC Champ)
5. **CESAR SOTO** Mexico 53-8-2
6. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 31-2
7. **MANUEL MEDINA** Mexico 57-11
8. **MBULELO BOTILE** South Africa 26-1
9. **JUAN CARLOS RAMIREZ** Mexico 20-2
10. **ANGEL VAZQUEZ** Hartford, CT 20-0

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Mexico 49-3
2. **ERIK MORALES** Mexico 36-0 (WBC Champ)
3. **BONES ADAMS** Henderson, KY 39-3-3 (WBA Champ)
4. **LEHLO LEDWABA** South Africa 30-1-1 (IBF Champ)
5. **WAYNE McCULLOUGH** Las Vegas, NV 23-3
6. **NESTOR GARZA** Mexico 38-2
7. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ** Mexico 26-1-1
8. **ANTONIO CERMENO** Venezuela 38-3
9. **MANNY PACQUAIO** Philippines 27-2
10. **MICHAEL BRODIE** England 28-0

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

1. **TIM AUSTIN** Cincinnati, OH 20-0-1 (IBF Champ)
2. **PAULIE AYALA** Ft. Worth, TX 30-1 (WBA Champ)
3. **JOHNNY TAPIA** Albuquerque, NM 48-1-2
4. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 26-1 (WBC Champ)
5. **NANA KONADU** Ghana 40-4-1
6. **JORGE ELIECER JULIO** Colombia 42-2
7. **CUAUHTEMOC GOMEZ** Mexico 47-7
8. **JOHNNY BREDAHL** Denmark 45-2
9. **ADAN VARGAS** Mexico 33-2-1
10. **JORGE LACIERVA** Mexico 15-3-3

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

1. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ**
   Germany 31-0 (WBC Champ)
2. **VASSILIY JIROV**
   Kazakhstan 25-0 (IBF Champ)
3. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
   France 42-1 (WBA Champ)
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England 37-12-1
5. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ**
   Argentina 29-3-1
6. **ARTHUR WILLIAMS**
   Pensacola, FL 32-5-1
7. **JAMES TONEY**
   Las Vegas, NV 59-4-2
8. **CARL THOMPSON**
   England 26-5
9. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND 45-3
10. **SAUL MONTANA**
    Mexico 33-7

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight limit: 175 pounds

1. **ROY JONES**
   Pensacola, FL 42-1 (WBC/WBA/IBF Champ)
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany 42-0
3. **REGGIE JOHNSON**
   Houston, TX 40-6-1
4. **MICHAEL NUNN**
   Davenport, IA 54-4
5. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadelphia, PA 18-0-1
6. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 16-0
7. **DAVID TELESCO**
   Port Chester, NY 23-3
8. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL 39-3
9. **GREG WRIGHT**
   Bronx, NY 18-5-2
10. **DERRICK HARMON**
    Chicago, IL 20-1

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

1. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany 19-0 (IBF Champ)
2. **BRUNO GIRARD**
   France 37-3-1 (WBA Champ)
3. **GLENN CATLEY**
   England 26-3 (WBC Champ)
4. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales 28-0
5. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA 35-6
6. **THOMAS TATE**
   Houston, TX 38-6
7. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL 20-1-1
8. **MARKUS BEYER**
   Germany 18-1
9. **FRANKIE LILES**
   N. Hollywood, CA 32-2
10. **RICHIE WOODHALL**
    England 26-2

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Philadelphia, PA 37-2-1 (IBF Champ)
2. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. 30-1-1 (WBA Champ)
3. **KEITH HOLMES**
   Washington, D.C. 35-2 (WBC Champ)
4. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA 24-3-1
5. **HASSINE CHERIFI**
   France 30-3-1
6. **ARMAND KRAJNC**
   Sweden 23-0
7. **DAVEY HILTON**
   Canada 38-1-3
8. **BERT SCHENK**
   Germany 23-0
9. **BRIAN BARBOSA**
   Passaic, NJ 28-4
10. **ANDREW COUNCIL**
    Washington, D.C. 30-7-3

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Whittier, CA 32-1 (WBC Champ)
2. **JAMES PAGE**
   Pittsburg, CA 25-3 (WBA Champ)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA 34-0
4. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA 31-0
5. **OBA CARR**
   Detroit, MI 50-3-1
6. **SHANNAN TAYLOR**
   Australia 26-0-1
7. **WILFREDO RIVERA**
   Puerto Rico 30-4-1
8. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark 20-0
9. **DERRELL COLEY**
   Capitol Heights, MD 34-2-2
10. **ANDREW LEWIS**
    Guyana 19-0-1

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

1. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Australia 24-1-1 (WBC Champ)
2. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. 46-2 (WBA Champ)
3. **TERRONN MILLETT**
   St. Louis, MO 22-1-1
4. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY 22-0 (IBF Champ)
5. **RANDALL BAILEY**
   Miami, FL 21-0
6. **ANTONIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA 31-2
7. **MICKY WARD**
   Lowell, MA 35-9
8. **REGGIE GREEN**
   Clinton, MD 32-4
9. **TEDDY REID**
   Washington, D.C. 16-3-1
10. **HECTOR CAMACHO JR**
    Puerto Rico 27-0

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

1. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO 30-1 (WBC Champ)
2. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN 32-4-1
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA**
   Pittsburgh, PA 30-0 (IBF Champ)
4. **CESAR BAZAN**
   Mexico 37-3-1
5. **GILBERTO SERRANO**
   Venezuela 20-4-1 (WBA Champ)
6. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan 29-0
7. **IVAN ROBINSON**
   Philadelphia, PA 29-4
8. **JAMES LEIJA**
   San Antonio, TX 40-4-2
9. **JOHN-JOHN MOLINA**
   Puerto Rico 51-6
10. **BEN TACKIE**
    Ghana 20-1

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI 23-0 (WBC Champ)
2. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Sacramento, CA 31-0 (IBF Champ)
3. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL 21-0 (WBA Champ)
4. **JONGKWON BAEK**
   South Korea 21-1-1
5. **LAKVA SIM**
   Mongolia 12-2-1
6. **YONG SOO CHOI**
   South Korea 27-3-1
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Austin, TX 30-1
8. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil 25-0
9. **GOYO VARGAS**
   Mexico 40-7-1
10. **ROBERTO GARCIA**
    Oxnard, CA 32-2

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

1. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Washington, D.C. 38-1
2. **IN JOO CHO**
   South Korea 18-0 (WBC Champ)
3. **HIDEKI TODAKA**
   Japan 17-2-1 (WBA Champ)
4. **JESUS ROJAS**
   Venezuela 33-8-3
5. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines 41-3-2
6. **YOKTHAI SITHOAR**
   Thailand 22-1-1
7. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN**
   Thailand 36-4
8. **JOEL LUNA-ZARATE**
   Mexico 33-3-2
9. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI 25-0
10. **SAMSON TOYOTA-THAILAND**
    Thailand 35-0

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

1. **SORNPICHAI SINGWANGCHA**
   Thailand 19-0 (WBA Champ)
2. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines 11-0 (WBC Champ)
3. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia 24-0 (IBF Champ)
4. **CHATCHAI DUTCHBOY GYM**
   Thailand 37-2
5. **MEDGOEN TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand 20-1
6. **LEO GAMEZ**
   Venezuela 32-7-1
7. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand 38-1
8. **JOSE BONILLA**
   Venezuela 27-5
9. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 42-3
10. **ISIDRO GARCIA**
    Los Angeles, CA 20-1-1

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Mexico 48-0-1 (IBF Champ)
2. **YOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea 21-1 (WBC Champ)
3. **PICHIT C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand 22-1 (WBA Champ)
4. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua 26-1-1
5. **SAMAN SORJATURONG**
   Thailand 42-3-1
6. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
   South Africa 18-0
7. **MELCHOR COB-CASTRO**
   Mexico 58-6-4
8. **WILL GRIGSBY**
   St. Paul, MN 14-2-1
9. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico 22-3-1
10. **HIDENOBU HONDA**
    Japan 20-1

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

1. **ZOLANI PETELO**
   South Africa 16-2-2 (IBF Champ)
2. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico 22-1-1 (WBC Champ)
3. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 41-1-1
4. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela 12-1-1 (WBA Champ)
5. **WANDEE SINGWANGCHA**
   Thailand 25-4
6. **SONGKRAM PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 20-2-1
7. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Columbia 32-2
8. **JOSE GARCIA**
   Colombia 22-5-1
9. **JOMA GAMBOA**
   Philippines 28-5-1
10. **DANIEL REYES**
    Colombia 24-0

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

YOU'RE GETTING ON MY NERVES

For the longest time, writing a column about the most annoying people in boxing was a no-brainer. The only tough part was keeping it to two pages instead of something that rivaled the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Then one day a few years ago, something strange occurred. My attempts to compile a list of all-time grates left me with a bad case of writer's block. Surprisingly, there just didn't seem to be that many people around who poisoned my mood, made the bile rise in my throat, and got under my skin as often as a tattoo artist gets under Angel Manfredy's. So the column was scrapped.

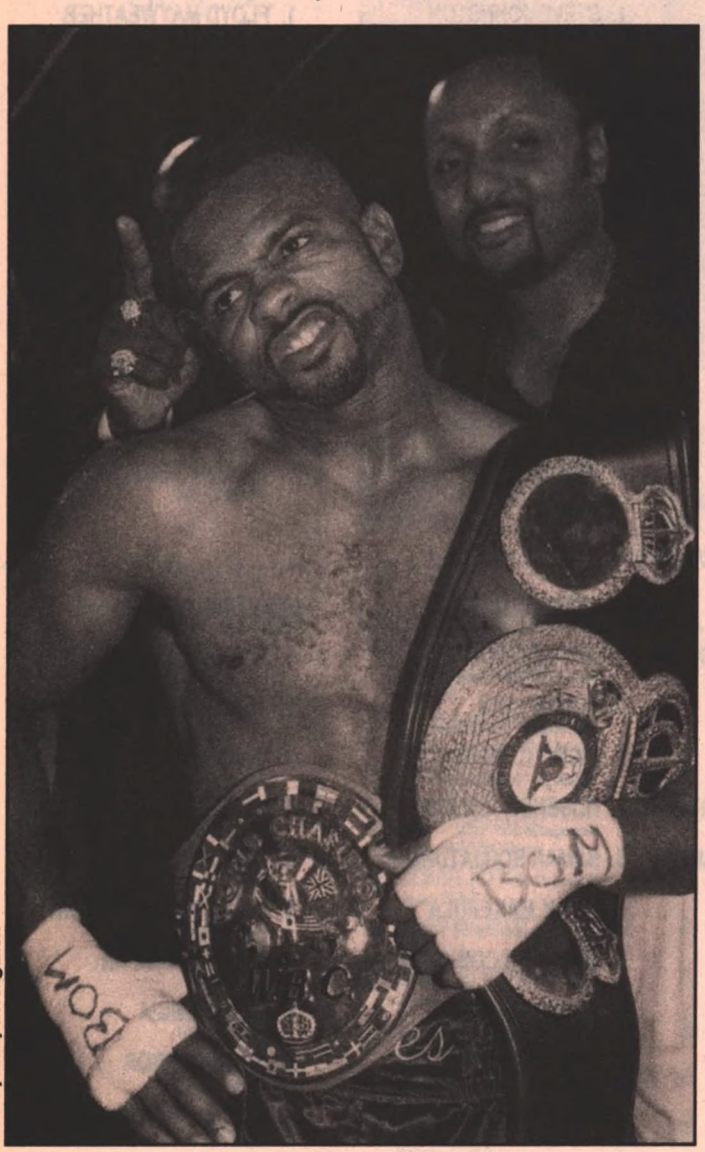


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Jones: So much to dislike

Now, I'm displeased to report, it's back. The fight game's extensive farm system has churned out a few new irritants, while some of the old ones reacquired the traits that made them such pains in the ass originally. So once again, I find myself with plenty to get off my chest, and not enough pages to do it in. Whoever said boxing was cyclical sure knew what he was talking about.

In no particular order, the most annoying people the fight game is proud to call its own:

1) Female fighters: They come in three varieties. There are the pinups, who are all hooters but whose skills are nothing to hoot about; the white trash tomato cans, who fight only when they got shortchanged on tips that week at Denny's; and the arrogant, trash-talking, marquee prima donnas who think sportsmanship, like a jock strap, is something with which they don't need to concern themselves.

That third group, consisting of Christy Martin, Lucia Rijker, Laila Ali, and Jacqui Frazier-Lyde, is by far the most annoying. These Tonya Hardings of the heavybag never met a verbal low blow, live TV camera, or brutal mismatch they didn't like. Martin may be "The Coal Miner's Daughter," but she talks like the longshoreman's drinking buddy and gets decisions she doesn't deserve. Rijker lost my respect when she sucker-punched Martin at a public workout. Ali turned me off in her first fight, when she decked her hapless foe, then acted like Daddy beckoning Sonny Liston to get up. Frazier-Lyde? She was making threats and issuing challenges before she'd even made her debut!

You are woman, hear you bore.

Here's my suggestion: a loser-shuts-up-forever tournament. Ali vs. Frazier in one grudge semifinal and Martin vs. Rijker in the other. The tourney winner then gets the chance to play the Billie Jean King role in a "Battle Of The Sexes"

match with Kostya Tszyu. On a day when he's in a really bad mood. As Ralph Kramden loved to say, *bang—zoom!*

2) Butterbean: It isn't easy ripping the lovable legume. For one thing, he's a good guy. For another, anyone who resembles King Kong Bundy, one of my all-time favorite grapplers, deserves some slack. Nonetheless, I'm going after him the way he goes after a heaping helping of barbecued ribs.

Why, exactly, is this man fighting? What is he trying to accomplish? Butterbean has had 58 pro fights and isn't any closer to being a top-10 contender than Orson Bean is. No longer a novelty, yet clearly intent on never meeting top-notch competition, Butterbean toils in a fistic twilight zone. His bouts have no significance. He's working a dead-end job. Still, he commands attention, gets exposure, and cashes bigger paydays than he should.

Too many servings of this Bean is—oops, pardon me—starting to give me gas.

3) Evander Holyfield: You have to wonder if Mike Tyson's chompers did more damage to "The Real Deal's" ear than has been reported. After all, retirement has been calling Holyfield for a while now, but he just can't seem to hear it.

What's the matter, Evander? Even though you're the richest fighter in history, you're still greedy for more green? You haven't received enough accolades from the press? Not enough fans have chanted your name? Or is it that you've somehow convinced yourself that you're only a borderline Hall of Fame candidate who still needs to impress the voters?

That paper title shot against John Ruiz, and the payday that will accompany it, should have gone to someone else. Someone younger, in his prime, and in need of such an opportunity. Hey, Vander, if you're sticking around in the hope of landing a third fight with Lennox Lewis, don't bother. Nobody's stupid enough to buy that one on pay-per-view again. So if we're determined to save the $49.95, you might as well pack it in already and save a few brain cells.

4) Roy Jones: There's just so much to dislike. He needs to beat Dariusz Michalczewski to take care of the last piece of unfinished business at light heavyweight, but balks at signing for the fight. With all the subtlety of Tony Soprano shaking down a factory owner, Jones gets HBO to give his buddy, Derrick Gainer, far more air time than a fighter of such limited skills deserves. When Jones makes his Radio City Music Hall debut, he cues up a horrible rap record he cut, prances and dances, and takes longer to get to the ring than Balboa did to reach the Pacific.

The most annoying thing about Jones, though, is his perpetual heavyweight tease. Will he move up to tangle with the big guys or won't he? Sure he will, provided it's the right opponent at the right time for the right money with the moon in the right phase—that is, if Jones doesn't decide to act on that urge to retire first. Is it just me? Or do you, too, want to see Jones drop his hands to showboat one day, catch a haymaker in the chops, and end up deposited in Jim Lampley's lap?

5) Eastern European fighters: They must be putting something in the kapusta soup that's shrinking these guys' hearts. First it was Andrew Golota quitting in a fight he was winning against Michael Grant, now it's Vitaly Klitschko surrendering despite being in control of Chris Byrd. Golota and Klitschko should have been

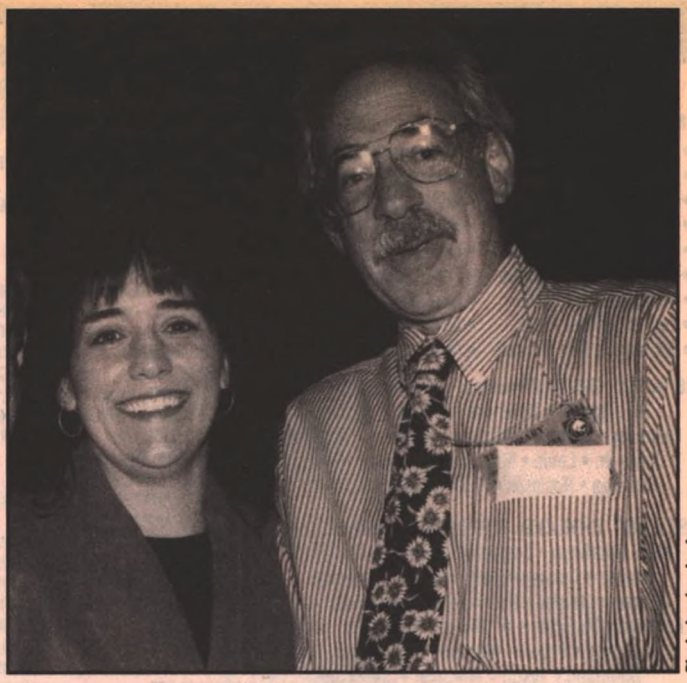


Photo by Jay Lash

Martin and Ratner both get under Ryan's skin

stripped of their boxing licenses. And before getting them back, they should have been forced to watch film of Rocky Marciano, his nose split hideously, finishing off Ezzard Charles, and Joe Frazier getting up from six knockdowns against George Foreman.

For fun sometime, imagine Golota in action at other moments in boxing history. For example, he's Mike Weaver flattening John Tate in the 15th round, but before the ref can finish counting over the motionless Tate, Golota abruptly quits. Or he's Aaron Pryor pinning a woozy Alexis Arguello on the ropes, but he gets disqualified for landing nine straight punches to Arguello's cup.

Maybe some masochistic promoter ought to match Golota and Klitschko. There's an idea. The battle can be dubbed, "Win ... Or Pack It In."

6) Marc Ratner: A suspension of Tyson for ear-biting gave the impression that Ratner, the executive director of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, runs a tight ship. But while he makes sure the decks are swabbed and the bunk beds are made, Ratner is oblivious to the 50-foot gash in the hull.

Nevada continues to feature the absolute worst scoring of any major fight city in the world. The problem existed long before Ratner was in charge, but today, 21 years after the controversial Marvin Hagler-Vito Antuofermo draw, we still hear announcers saying things like, "We have Smith way ahead, but this is Las Vegas, so you can never be sure."

Wonder if Ratner has noticed that some of the same names that always used to precede the reading of inexplicably nutty scorecards 15 and 20 years ago—Dalby Shirley, Duane Ford, Chuck Giampa—are still being announced today. Some coincidence, huh?

Space limitations dictate that I give only Annoyance Honorable Mentions to Prince Naseem Hamed, Ike Ibeabuchi, Fernando Vargas, Max Kellerman, and Michael Buffer. But don't feel slighted, guys. In your apparent quest to become future thorns in my side, you're all showing a lot of promise. ■

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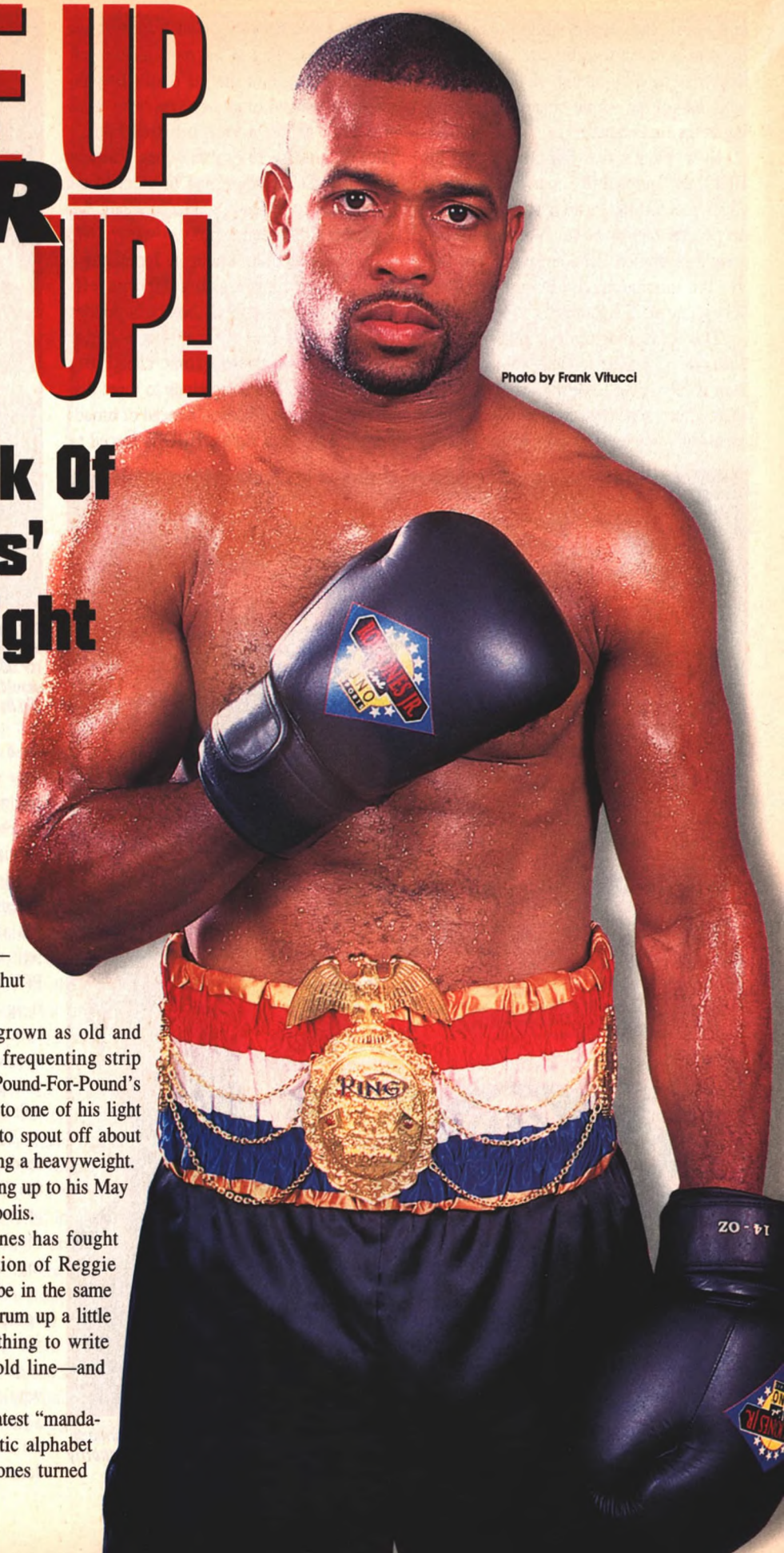


Photo by Frank Vitucci

By Nigel Collins

It's time for Roy Jones to cut the crap. If he's going to fight a marquee heavyweight—and let's face it, nobody is interested in seeing him fight a second-tier guy—now is the time. If not, he should shut up about it, already, and move on.

Jones' heavyweight tease has grown as old and tedious as reports of Mike Tyson frequenting strip joints. For the past few years, Mr. Pound-For-Pound's modus operandi, during the buildup to one of his light heavyweight mismatches, has been to spout off about how he's seriously thinking of fighting a heavyweight. He was at it again in the weeks leading up to his May 13 bout with Richard Hall in Indianapolis.

Hall, like virtually everyone Jones has fought recently, with the possible exception of Reggie Johnson, was totally unqualified to be in the same ring with him. Perhaps in order to drum up a little interest and give the writers something to write about, Jones trotted out the same old line—and everybody bit.

Then, after he'd dispatched the latest "mandatory" foisted upon us by some idiotic alphabet group (in Hall's case, the WBA), Jones turned

coy again, and started talking about how big those heavyweights are and what a huge risk he'd be taking. Hello! Isn't that what makes the whole concept so intriguing in the first place?

Even HBO's Lou DiBella labeled the Hall fight "garbage," so maybe that's why Jones focused his customary prefight fantasy on the biggest target in boxing: heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis. The bigger the mismatch, the bigger the name Jones hints he'll fight next.

The thing that really rankles is that Jones doesn't have to fight no-hopers like Hall while trying to decide whether or not to go after the heavyweight crown. DiBella practically begged him give up the belts so that the cable network could feature Jones in fights deserving of his monumental talent, promising him that he'd still be paid the same amount of money sans belts. That was prior to the scandalous Rick Frazier farce in January 1999. But Jones wants to keep his gaudy straps, and in order to do so, he has to defend against any pug the Alphabet Boys deem worthy.

When you think about it, Jones has a pretty good hustle going for himself. Because of his status as boxing's pound-for-pound best, HBO wants him under contract, which doesn't come cheap. But because Jones has obligations to three different sanctioning bodies, instead of broadcasting top-notch fights, HBO is forced to air a string of appalling mismatches. Any way you look at it, Jones is getting first-rate money for taking third-rate chances.

Photo by Frank Vitucci

Tall order: Most experts think that the 6'5", 245-pound Lennox Lewis would be way too big for Jones. But that doesn't mean a lot of fans wouldn't pay big bucks to see him try to beat the heavyweight champion.

Dariusz Michalczewski celebrates his victory over Virgil Hill in 1997 that garnered the Germany-based Pole both the IBF and WBA light heavyweight titles (which he would vacate shortly thereafter). Still undefeated, Michalczewski has earned a crack at Jones.

Even so, nobody expects Jones to fight Lewis or any other top-notch heavy for the kind of money he gets for a routine defense, and that's why his HBO contract has a pay-per-view clause. In fact, his current contract only has one fight left, the PPV fight. Jones could, if he wanted, make it against a heavyweight. But when he's hemming and hawing about fighting undefeated Dariusz Michalczewski on PPV, you get the feeling that the heavyweight talk is just that, talk.

The Michalczewski fight could be made by the time you read this, but while the Germany-based Pole is a much more attractive challenger than anyone Jones has fought at 175 pounds, his chance of beating Jones is practically nil.

Another ploy to provide Jones with a competitive fight outside of the heavyweight division involves IBF middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins, who defended the 160-pound title for the 11th time by outpointing Syd Vanderpool on the Jones-Hall card. Hopkins gave Jones a decent fight back in '93 when they

clashed for the title Hopkins currently holds, which he succeeded in winning after Jones moved up in weight. Hopkins hasn't lost since, and hoped to enhance his strident demand for a rematch with an imposing performance against Vanderpool.

Unfortunately, although Hopkins won a unanimous decision with room to spare, there was nothing about his performance that would make anybody outside of his immediate family think he could beat Jones. Against Vanderpool, a strong, awkward southpaw, the Philly tough guy fought like a 35-year-old veteran who wanted to get through the fight without putting himself at risk, which is exactly what he did. Smart? Maybe, but only if self-preservation was his number-one priority.

Hopkins' next outing is supposed to be against Brian Barbosa, whose straight-

(Continued on page 71)

Photo by Will Hart/HBO

Bernard Hopkins gave Jones a decent tussle in 1993, and although "The Executioner" hasn't lost since, he's also done little to make people think he'd fare any better in a rematch.

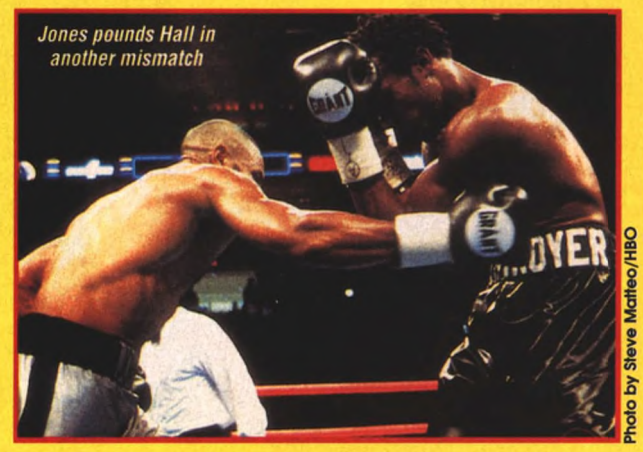
NO CHANCE IN HALL

Three-time former light heavyweight champion and lifelong Indianapolis resident Marvin Johnson must have shuddered as he watched Roy Jones do pretty much as he pleased with Richard Hall in the same city where Johnson had waged some of his bloodiest wars. It wouldn't have been the one-sided violence inside the ring that shocked Johnson, but the $3.75-million purse Jones pulled down for what amounted to a gimme. Warrior Johnson, who went toe-to-toe with such terrors as Victor Galindez, Matthew Saad Muhammad, and Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, didn't earn that kind of money for all of his 49 pro fights put together.

What the record-breaking crowd of 13,211 at the Conseco Fieldhouse and HBO's viewers got for their money was the expected mismatch. Despite winning 24 of his 25 previous fights (23 via kayo), Hall was taking a quantum leap in terms of quality, jumping from third- and fourth-level opponents to the best the game has to offer. Despite the Jamaica-born challenger's hardheaded courage, it wasn't a very edifying sight.

Hall, the WBA's number-one contender, began aggressively, taking the fight to the unified 175-pound champion. But Jones, 42-1 (34), soon turned his foe's bravery to his own advantage. A right to the head spun Hall in a circle, and when the 6'2" stringbean completed his 360-degree pivot, he was greeted by a left hook that put him on the floor. Hall beat the count, only to be dropped again with a straight right.

Somehow, Hall, one pound heavier at 174½, survived the first-round drubbing and almost 10 more rounds of one-way traffic. Clean shot after clean shot smacked into Hall's head, but he refused to go down again. In between belaboring Hall, Jones, 31, indulged in the distasteful showboating that has marred many of his bouts.



Jones pounds Hall in another mismatch

Photo by Steve Mattheo/HBO

The ninth and 10th round were particularly punishing for the 28-year-old challenger, and his corner should not have allowed him out for the 11th. But answer the bell he did, and the sickening rout continued. Referee Wayne Kelly (USA) allowed Hall to take at least a dozen punches too many (and that's just in the 11th) before belatedly ending Jones' assault at the 1:41 mark.

"When you're pound-for-pound the best in the world, you've gotta give the crowd a show," said Jones.

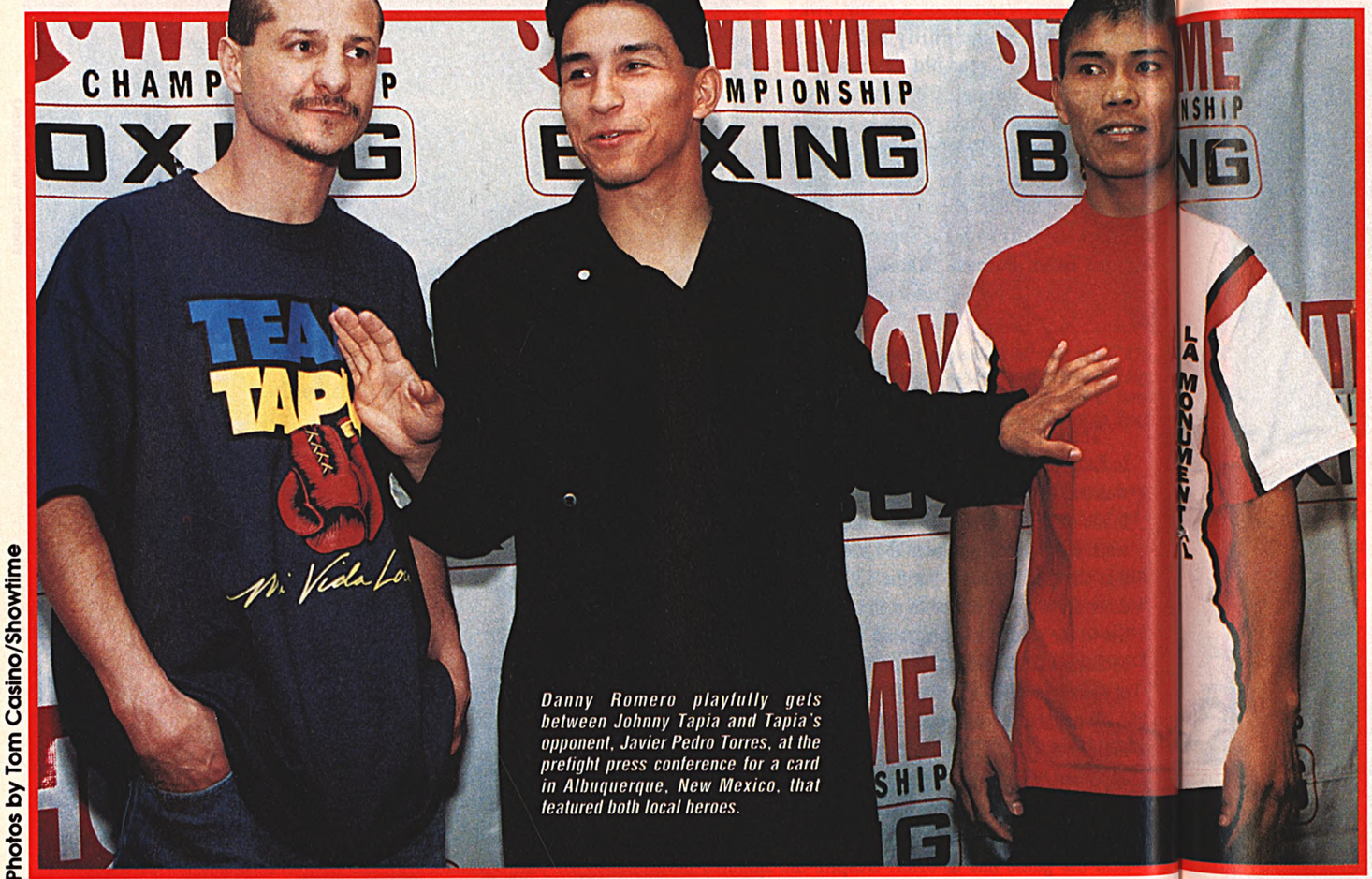
Sadly, his bout with Hall was more of a prolonged torture than a fight, and certainly not the sort of "show" that brought honor to the game or anybody involved, besides the defiant loser, who begged for more when Kelly made his overdue move.

Promoter: M&M Sports

(5-13-00)

—NC

THESE GUYS HATED EACH OTHER?



Danny Romero playfully gets between Johnny Tapia and Tapia's opponent, Javier Pedro Torres, at the prefight press conference for a card in Albuquerque, New Mexico, that featured both local heroes.

Photos by Tom Casino/Showtime

The Story Behind Tapia & Romero's Re-Born Friendship!

By Ted Bodenrader

The high desert grassland stretches out across 16 square miles, marked with dirt roads, alfalfa fields, and botanical gardens. It is a place where the horses run free and the landscapes steal your breath, the sun glistening off the Rio Grande as it sinks into the western horizon.

To truck drivers and passers by, this golden city of 700,000 is merely the junction of I-25 and I-40, a convenient pit stop between rowdy Texas and sunny California. But to its inhabitants, Albuquerque, New Mexico, really is a world all its own, a world that once sported room for just one ruler.

Johnny Tapia and Danny Romero fought for possession of that crown for nearly a half-decade, much the way noble emperors once battled for power over the Roman Empire. A mile was all that separated the world's premier 115-pound gladiators from one another, just a sharp turn from the corner of Seventh and Bella and another onto North Fourth, a few rural blocks away. But to anybody who knew of the scorching hatred that existed between these two bitter rivals, it was more than a few street corners that separated their differences. They were, indeed, distant worlds apart.

The boxing clan knew it as one of the most heated tussles since the Ali-Frazier grudges of the '70s. To those even closer to the opposing pupils of the city's Hide-Out Gym, it is really the story of the Old Man and the Young Buck.

"We go back a long way, Danny and I," said Tapia. "The differences we had were over being from the same neighborhood and both looking to be world champions at the same weight class. We didn't feel like there was enough room for two world champions in Albuquerque. And a lot of the problems stemmed from the fact that we're so different. I'm a lot older than he is."

It turned out that a mile was not all that separated the fiery Tapia from the rather subdued Romero. The seven-year age difference provided a gap the size of the Grand Canyon.

Tapia bores in on Torres en route to a 12-round decision triumph that Tapia says will be his last fight at 118 pounds. The "Guns For Tickets" promotion resulted in 400 firearms being taken off the streets.

Romero (right) tags Jorge Munoz with a left hook. The decision victory kept Romero's career moving forward. Until Tapia began putting him on his cards, Romero's career was stagnating.

Hence, the photograph that circulated around town became nearly legendary. Tapia, the 16-year-old star of the Hide-Out Gym, mugging for the camera at the '83 New Mexico Golden Gloves. At his side, his mentor, Danny Romero Sr., a man who helped mold Tapia into the eventual two-time world titlist he'd later become. In the corner of the photo, the nine-year-old bundled up at his father's waist side, little Danny Jr., a boy whose father's sweaty boxing dungeon became his only playground.

As Tapia and the little Romero grew older, their targets remained the same, but their paths split like jet fighters. Romero went one way, high into the clouds, as his talents lifted him into the warming stratosphere. Tapia dipped south into the pits of drugs and crime, crashing straight into trouble.

His struggles with cocaine cost him three years—some of it spent in prison—not to mention his beloved boxing license, which was snagged from him because of his chronic substance abuse. In the meantime, a lot happened in Albuquerque while Tapia was idle, namely Danny Romero. Romero's star was on the rise, and when locals spoke of pugilistic pride in these parts, only one name came to the surface. And it wasn't Johnny Tapia.

Upon his release from prison, Tapia left his personal problems in the dust, and reentered the dog fight with snarling fangs. When he regained his boxing license in March 1994, Tapia spun his career, once in a reckless tailspin, back into the sky at breakneck velocity. Some say the resurrected zest for boxing was fueled by one nine-word quote plastered throughout the local papers, a quote that sprung from the lips of the same boy who once hung about the local boxing gym on long summer days:

(Continued on page 71)

After Hitting Rock Bottom ...

HASIM RAHMAN IS ON A ROLL AGAIN!

By Eric Raskin

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Rahman, who said he would retire if he lost to Corrie Sanders, is all smiles after surviving an early shelling and rallying back to tally a seventh-round TKO at Bally's in Atlantic City.

What do Aretha Franklin and Hasim Rahman have in common? They both understand the value of respect. But however Aretha found out what R-E-S-P-E-C-T meant to her, it couldn't have been as hard a lesson as the one that made Rahman discover the meaning of the word. "The Rock" admits he didn't respect Oleg Maskaev coming into their November 1999 battle, and it cost him big time when he went to sleep in the eighth round courtesy of a nasty right hand and woke up on the floor of the Atlantic City Convention Center, just inches from Jim Lampley's lap, but miles from his previous status as a top heavyweight contender.

"I felt real strong, in real good condition three weeks before the Maskaev fight," Rahman explained. "But I did not respect Maskaev at all, because I remember back in Virginia in '96 I saw Oliver McCall hit him with one right hand in the first round, and he went right out of there. So I didn't really formulate a game plan. I didn't watch any tapes. I just felt like if I catch him, that will be it.

For a guy best known for his dangerous right hand, Rahman did a lot of damage in the Sanders fight with his left, both hooking (above) and jabbing (bottom) with considerable effectiveness.

"So I left my training camp in Phoenix three weeks before the fight. Then I came home and I started doing things that boxers don't do when they start getting ready for a fight, and it really cost me. I broke training with my wife, and I didn't have any legs for the fight. I mean, I didn't stop going to the gym; I just added some extracurricular stuff. I definitely wasn't prepared for a 10-round fight, and I did it because I felt like it wasn't going to be a 10-round fight. I thought it was going to be one or two or three rounds."

It was disrespect that cost Rahman dearly against Maskaev. And it was the disrespect shown to him by Corrie Sanders in Rahman's do-or-die comeback fight on May 20 that sealed the South African's fate. Sanders handpicked Rahman to be his challenger for the WBU heavyweight title (Lampley accurately described it as an "off-off-off-brand title" on the HBO broadcast), which Rahman took as a sign of disrespect—but a welcome one, since it gave him his opening to re-enter the heavyweight picture. Then, after okaying Rahman's choice of Reyes gloves, Sanders changed his mind, decreeing that he would wear Ringside gloves and that, as challenger, Rahman would have to do the same. Rahman was already plenty motivated, announcing that he would retire if he lost to Sanders, but now Sanders had made it more personal than it had to be.

Photos by Will Hart/HBO

Still, Rahman was patient at the outset of the bout. The 6'4", 225-pound Sanders, who was fresh off a sensational one-round knockout of Al Cole, got off to his typical fast start, using his exceptional heavyweight hand speed and awkward southpaw style to control the early action. Late in the second round, Sanders hurt Rahman with a quick left-right and had him under fire along the ropes at the bell.

"Corrie Sanders was the hardest person who ever hit me since I've been boxing," said Rahman. "I don't know if it was the angles he was hitting me from, or if I didn't see the punches, or the torque he has coming down with his punches, but it was something. He throws punches in unconventional ways, and they're very effective. You don't knock out Bobby Czyz in two rounds and Al Cole in one round if you can't crack."

Sanders kept on cracking at the start of the third. A laser left uppercut pitched The Rock forward, and Sanders stepped out of the way and gave his opponent a little tug to help him fall into the ropes for a knockdown. While Rahman was turning to referee Eddie Cotton to complain, Sanders landed two more shots, and Rahman seemed to wake up to the fact that his career was in serious jeopardy. When Sanders tried to pounce on his man for the finish, Rahman came alive with a sizzling counter right to the chin, putting Sanders on the canvas, clearly more dazed than Rahman was when he went down.

The fireworks continued in the fourth when, during a furious exchange, the fighters landed simultaneous right hands, and Rahman's ability to steady himself by grabbing the top rope was the only thing preventing a double-knockdown. Sanders took his eight-count and kept trying, but he was losing his wind, and would never again take charge of the fight.

Rahman knocked Sanders' mouthpiece

out with a right hand in the sixth and backed him up throughout the round. Midway through the seventh, Sanders walked into a straight counter right, and sensing that his man was stunned, Rahman turned it on. He threw 38 unanswered punches, landing nearly all of them, and all Sanders could do was cover up along the ropes until Cotton came to his rescue at the 1:50 mark.

"I think that the referee stopped the fight a bit early," Sanders, 36-2 (26), said afterward. "I was covering up and forgot to throw back punches, but no excuses—he beat me."

It was precisely the kind of win Rahman, 33-2 (27), needed. His confidence never required mending, but his reputation did. His first loss came in December '98, when he squared off with David Tua in a crucial bout to determine the IBF's number-one heavyweight contender. The Rock was rolling toward the biggest win of his career, leading by insurmountable margins on two of the three scorecards, when Tua caught him with a wicked left hook just after the bell rang to end the ninth round. Rahman wobbled back to his corner, didn't get the five-minute rest he should have received following the accidental foul, and saw the fight prematurely stopped 35 seconds into the 10th round while he was slipping powershots along the ropes.

Things didn't look too good for Rahman when Sanders draped him over the ropes for a third-round knockdown. Shortly after he got up, however, Rahman dropped his South African rival with a counter right.

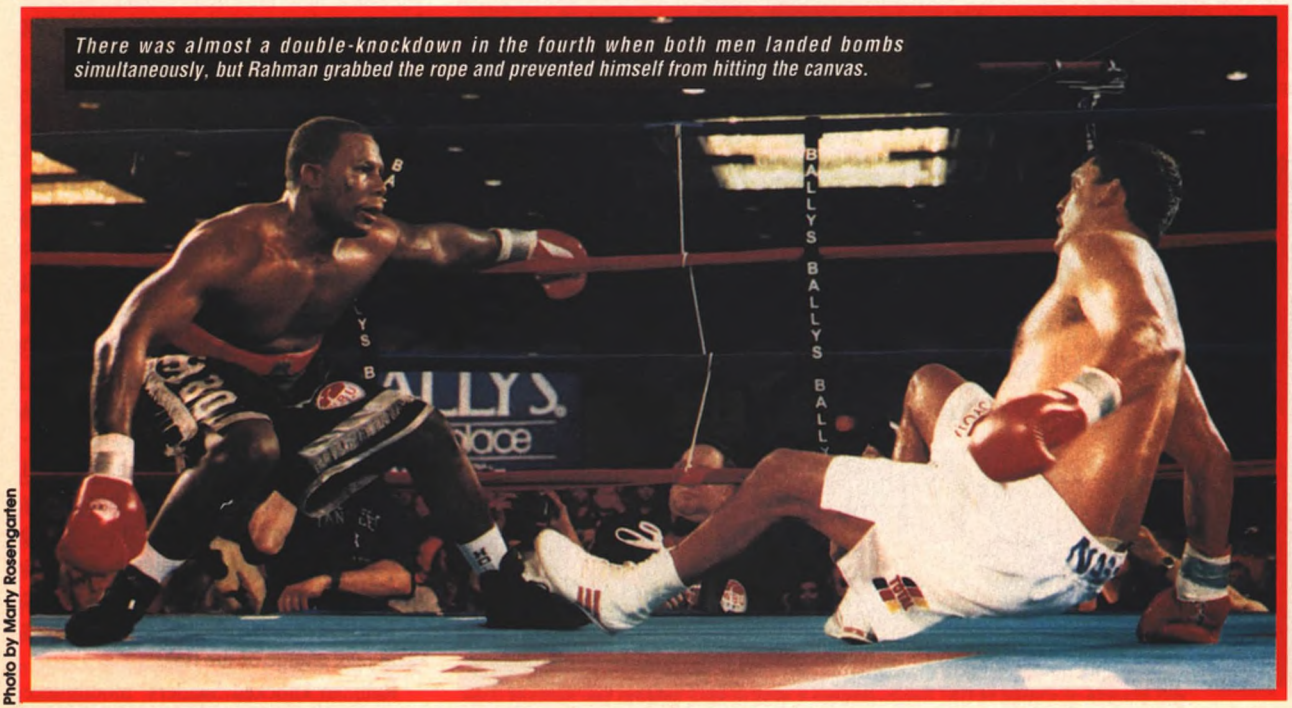
His stature wasn't really hurt by the controversial loss—if anything, he proved on that night that he *was* a legitimate contender—but he still needed a big win to get back on track. It was supposed to come against Maskaev, but the Russian didn't follow the script, forcing observers to wonder whether The Rock had turned to rubble. But Rahman never had any doubts.

"From my point of view, the Maskaev fight didn't crush me like it might crush somebody else," Rahman said. "People are always talking about a fighter's psyche, but mine was okay. I knew I had two losses in my career, one which I really feel like I was blatantly cheated, and one which I know that I beat myself."

But just believing in himself wasn't enough. Rahman knew that his previous training methods—going away to camp with trainers who lived far away from his native Baltimore, Maryland, then taking months off between fights—weren't going to cut it anymore. He hired local guru Adrian Davis, who trains WBA middleweight champ William Joppy and who taught current WBA super lightweight titlist Sharmba Mitchell how to box, to take over and turn him from a

(Continued on page 72)

There was almost a double-knockdown in the fourth when both men landed bombs simultaneously, but Rahman grabbed the rope and prevented himself from hitting the canvas.



A Dozen Years To Glory

THE 10 FIGHTS THAT MADE LENNOX LEWIS

By William Dettloff

No matter what he does, some guys will never take to Lennox Lewis. Maybe it's the British accent, which to many of us in America, just never seems right coming out of the mouth of a fighter, especially a heavyweight. Maybe it's the manners and the chess; we don't care much for erudite fighters either, even if we don't like to admit it. Maybe it's the aloof arrogance he shows on occasion, or the way he constantly keeps us guessing: Is he a jab-and-clutch kind of guy, or a right-handed slugger? Make up your mind already. Or, maybe it's that sense we always get that there's just something missing in him, that he really could be all trainer Emanuel Steward swears he is, but a tiny piece of the puzzle, maybe a chromosome or something that special fighters have, is missing, and we'll spend the rest of his career waiting for him to do something he'll never do.

Whether or not you like Lewis, or, more importantly, whether or not you think he can fight, these points must be considered: He has beaten every relevant heavyweight of his era and ducked no one. To the contrary, two contemporaries went out of their way to avoid him in matchups he pursued; Riddick Bowe relinquished the WBC belt rather than face him, and Mike Tyson threw enough step-aside money at him to sustain for a decade the economies of several dozen third-world countries. He has lost just once, and if you believe a knockout punch can be lucky, there's no better example than the one Oliver McCall laid on him in 1994. He unified the heavyweight title—some might say twice, counting both fights with Evander Holyfield—and is considered the undisputed champion of the world by everyone who doesn't stand to make a buck or two from the travesty that is Holyfield vs. John Ruiz.

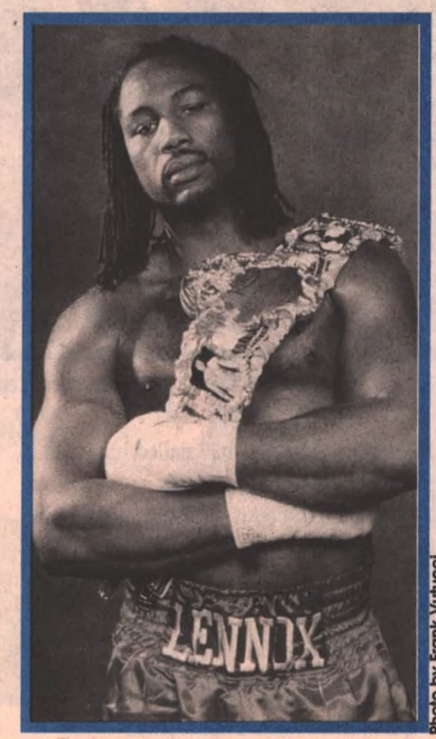


Photo by Frank Vutucci

Still, it's easy to watch Lewis and wonder how he keeps winning. He's still clumsy. He still doesn't fight with fire. He's still ridiculously hittable and we'll never forgive him for struggling against Zeljko Mavrovic. But name someone who can beat him. He's a heavy favorite against anyone out there including Mike Tyson, who talks a good game, but who wants Lewis like he wants to room with Ike Ibeabuchi.

Obviously, Lewis didn't arrive at his current position overnight. The pieces have fallen together over a decade, and several were especially significant. Which ones? Glad you asked. What follows are the 10 fights that made Lennox Lewis. Some were good showings, some bad, but each played a part in making him what he is today. Take him or leave him.

LENNOX LEWIS KO2 RIDDICK BOWE

October 2, 1988
Chamshil Students' Gymnasium
Seoul, South Korea

If you're into Olympic boxing, you know that, as in the pros, the big guys get a lot of the attention. And at the 1988 games, all the talk at super heavyweight involved Bowe. How he was a big, talented kid with a good punch and a good story. You remember, he had that whole Brooklyn thing going on, how he was from the same "mean streets" as Mike Tyson, how he walked his mother to and from work every day so she wouldn't get mugged or worse. Likable kid, that Bowe, even if he seemed not to take anything seriously, not even the Olympics. Still, he could fight, and as long as he kept his head straight and stopped joking around so damned much, he'd take the gold easy. And after that, the promoters would be all over him.

Lewis? Sure, he was okay, too. From Britain, right? No, well, yes, from England originally, but living in Canada for the time being and fighting under the Canadian flag. Whatever. He had a decent right hand, they said, but where was the story? No walking his mother up and down the London streets? No hiding under his bed while his window was peppered with stray bullets during a random drive-by? He'd be no match for Bowe in the finals. Not enough of a story.

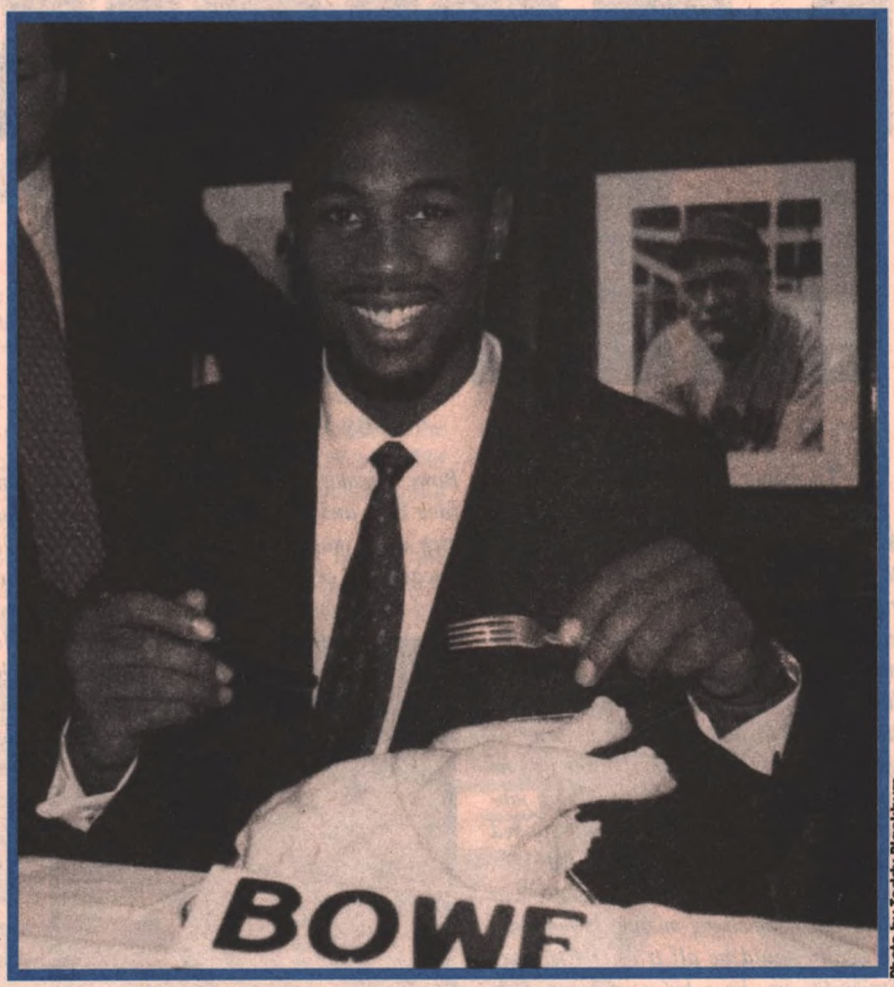


Photo by Teddy Blackburn

After beating Bowe in the Olympics, Lewis took to calling him "chicken"

Bowe started strongly, rattling Lewis in the first with a right hand and a followup barrage. If he could have kept the momentum going, who knows, maybe Lewis wouldn't have gotten out of the round. But East German referee Gustav Baumgardt halted the action to deduct a point from Bowe for ducking his head below the waistline. When the fight resumed in the second, it was all Lewis. He jumped on Bowe and nailed him with a right of his own. Baumgardt gave Bowe a standing eight-count, and the moment he finished, Lewis was at it again, tagging Bowe with another big right. The guy with the story and the jokes staggered, and Baumgardt leaped in to administer another standing eight. When he reached eight, he looked into Bowe's eyes and stopped it at 43 seconds of the round.

"I thought it was a somewhat premature decision," Bowe complained. "I was trying to indicate that I was okay, but the referee didn't take heed to it." Meanwhile the guy from England, or Canada, or wherever, was later seen getting a big, flashy gold medal draped around his neck. Not bad for a guy with no story.

LENNOX LEWIS KO 2 DONOVAN "RAZOR" RUDDOCK

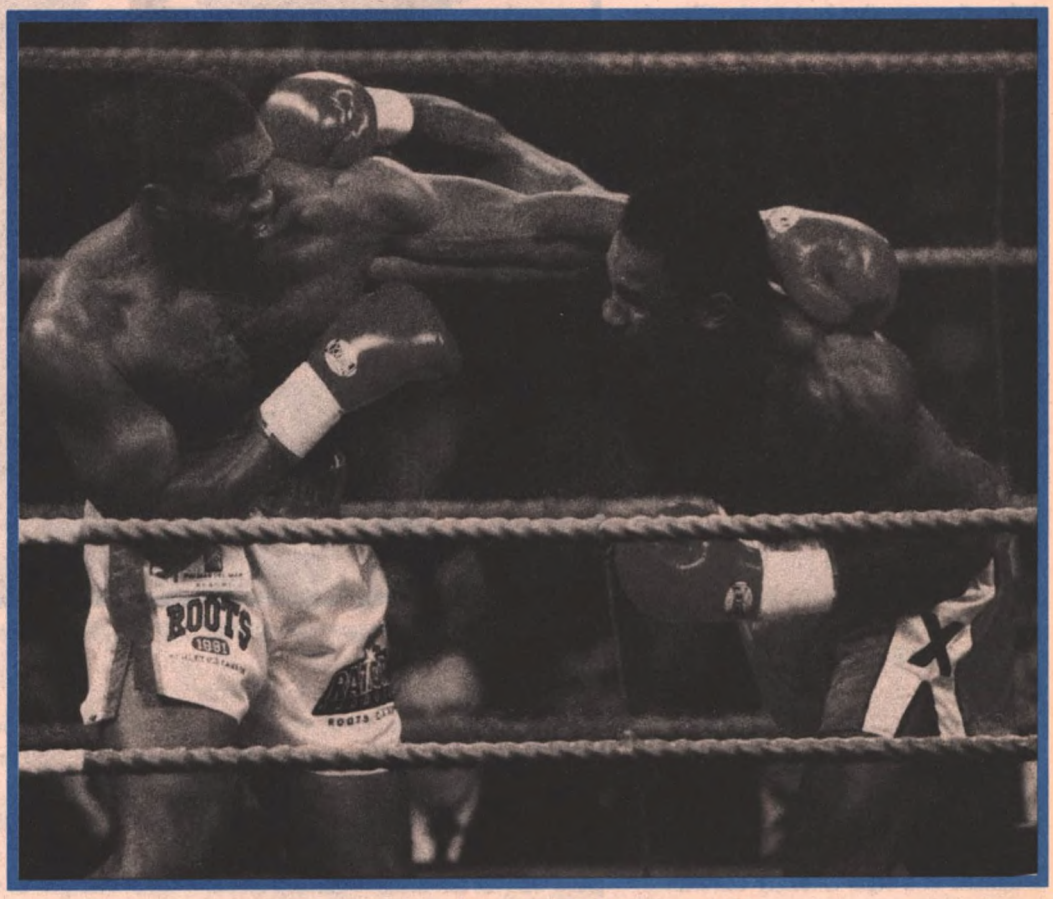
October 31, 1992
Earls Court
London, England

Until he faced Ruddock, Lewis was just another big heavyweight puncher from England. Nothing special; at least nothing that had been proved. His record was fat and glossy, just like all the other heavyweight prospects and contained just the same names: Melvin Epps, Dan Murphy, Ossie Ocasio, Tyrell Biggs, Levi Billups. It helped that he was an Olympic champion and had trounced Bowe to get the gold. But lots of gold medal winners had fizzled in the pro ranks. And plus, he was British, and we all know what happens to British heavyweights when they cross the shores in search of professional stardom. That he was among the top contenders in the WBC amounted to little, and if you don't know why that is, you haven't been paying attention.

So not that much was thought of Lewis when he was matched against Ruddock as part of a four-way series that was meant to determine who was the best of the world's non-incarcerated heavyweights (Holyfield against Bowe was the other match). Indeed, Ruddock had by this time gone 19 rounds with Mike Tyson and nearly killed poor Michael Dokes in one of the most gruesome and emphatic knockouts in years. He predicted grave things for Lewis. "Lennox has never been hit the way I hit people. When I hit him, he's going to feel the power and he's going to go down and stay down for a long time."

Instead, it was Ruddock, who, toward the end of the first round, was flattened by a straight right hand that to this day is probably the best punch Lewis has ever thrown. "It felt very natural, almost fired like a gunshot," Lewis said. "I knew I hit him with a good shot, as his eyes looked enlarged and his legs unsteady." The fun wasn't over. Lewis jumped on Ruddock in the second and sent him down with a hook and another right. Another combination dropped Ruddock one more time, and referee Joe Cortez stopped counting midway through.

Of course, the series stopped then and there. Bowe threw the WBC belt he won from Holyfield in the garbage can, from which place Lewis was more than happy to retrieve it. Sometimes what you do with a title is more important than how you win it. And Lewis was just getting started.



Lewis slings a right hand at prefight favorite Ruddock

LENNOX LEWIS KO 7 FRANK BRUNO

October 1, 1993
Cardiff Arms Park Rugby Stadium
Cardiff, Wales

It's not always the best fighters who are the most popular. Sometimes, mediocre pugs spark something in fans that endear them to their hearts forever. Bruno was such a fighter. We never could understand it in America. To us he was just a big statue of a heavyweight with a lantern of a jaw and a slightly better than average right hand. That's it. But in England, Bruno was an icon, up there almost with Winston Churchill or the Beatles. Go figure.

Lewis had nowhere near the same level of affection from his countrymen. It didn't help, of course, that he won the Olympic gold medal while fighting for Canada. It mattered little that he returned to England the minute he turned pro, or that he was born right in London's East End, or that he continually reaffirmed his British nationality in the press. If he hoped for even a fraction of the admiration Bruno received, he'd have to beat him, even if it meant risking the scorn that normally comes with toppling an established hero.

Maybe it was too close to home for Lewis, too close to the 20,000 Bruno fans who chanted the challenger's name over and over during the early rounds. Whatever it was, Lewis was awful in attempting his second defense of the WBC title. Bruno outjabbed him from the start and, in the third round, rocked him with a straight right. "He thought he had me," Lewis said. "But actually I just lost my footing. I saw every punch coming."

He saw a lot, then, because Bruno kept on outfighting him and even opened up a cut near Lewis' left eye. But one of Bruno's myriad weaknesses was his wind, and by the fifth he was wheezing like an asthmatic at a cigar smoking convention. Still, he wobbled Lewis with another right late in the fifth and fought on even terms until the seventh when Lewis, taking cover from another clumsy volley, crashed a gargantuan hook off of the lantern. Bruno stumbled backward, already gone, and Lewis pounced. He held Bruno's head in place with his left and straightened him up with an uppercut, drawing a warning from referee Mickey Vann (where have we seen that recently?), but it was too late. Bruno was done, and one more clubbing volley convinced Vann to stop it at 1:12 of the round. It was neither pretty nor impressive, and Bruno was still England's favorite heavyweight at the end. But he wasn't their best one.

Despite unexpected difficulty, Lewis stopped the popular Bruno

OLIVER McCALL KO 2 LENNOX LEWIS

September 24, 1994
Wembley Arena
London, England

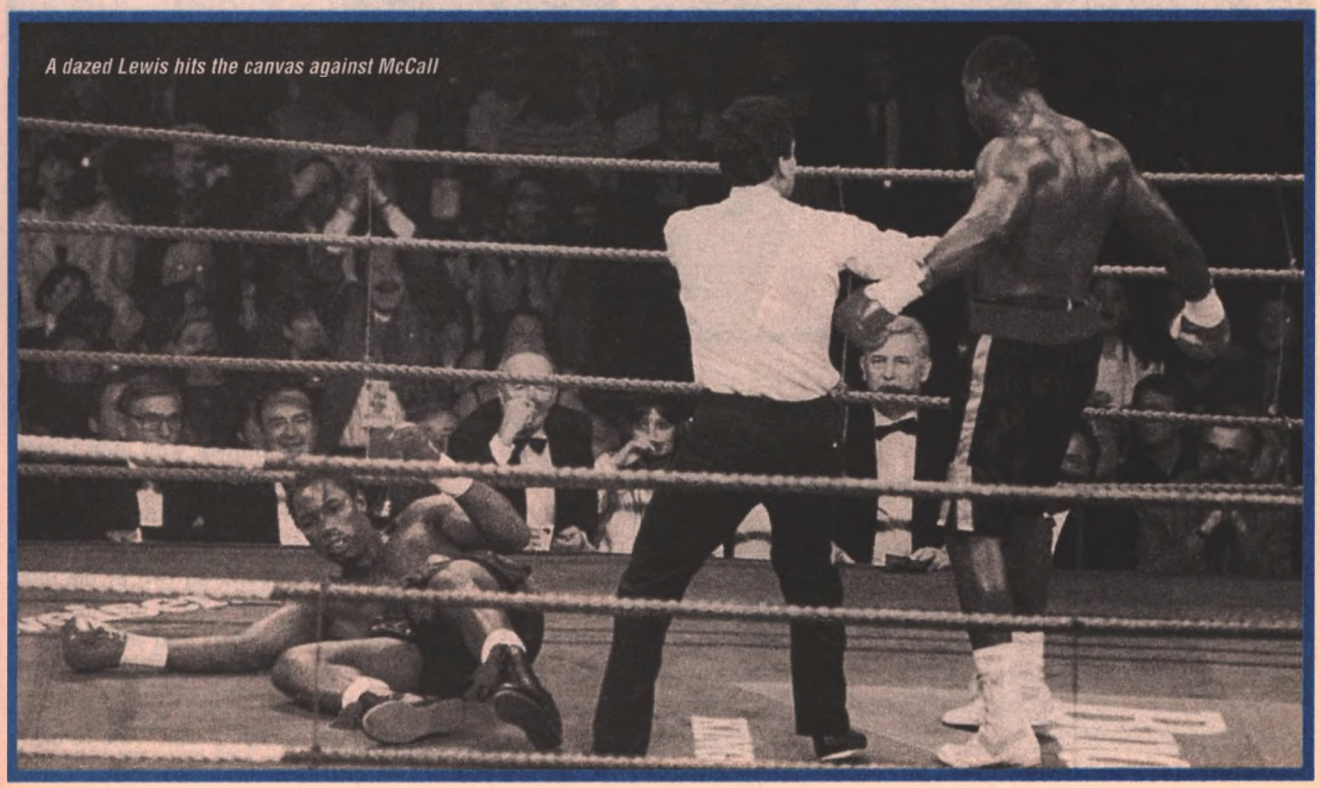
Don King couldn't have been happier if he'd signed every member of the 1976 Olympic team to life-long contracts. Sure Mike Tyson was in prison, but Lennox Lewis, the soon-to-be former owner of the WBC belt and a fighter over whom King held no rights, was on the deck looking up at McCall, a wholly ordinary heavyweight whom King owned lock, stock, and straitjacket. And it was happening live on HBO, Lewis' network. Life was good.

It wasn't supposed to go this way for Lewis. He was supposed to make his fourth defense of the WBC title an easy one against McCall. Criminy, the guy had lost to Mike "The Bounty" Hunter, Buster Douglas, Orlin Norris, and Tony Tucker. Still, he arrived at the top of the WBC ratings—wonder how that happened—but was given so little chance of giving Lewis a fight that only 4,000 fans showed up to watch Lewis wreck him. But McCall went out and got Emanuel Steward to train him, and Steward taught him how to throw a quick counter right whenever Lewis wound up with his own right hand. In the second, McCall followed the strategy to a tee—well, almost; Steward's plan was for McCall to keep his eyes open when he threw the counter right. Anyway, it crashed home, and down flopped Lewis in a heap.

"I just got caught with a lucky shot. I wasn't badly hurt. I was dazed," Lewis said.

Lewis struggled up at six, wobbled around a little, and tucked his gloves up under his chin to show referee Jose Guadalupe Garcia that he could continue. Nice try. Garcia, who was appointed by the WBC, and who would immediately become a target of the HBO broadcast team, waved it over as Lewis first stumbled into his arms and then looked incredulously at no one in particular at the stoppage.

"I was waiting for him to throw the right, and I was perfecting that counter right hand," McCall explained. "I threw the right and whoop, there it is!" Over McCall's left shoulder could be seen you-know-who, grinning broadly. It would take a while, but Lewis would get his revenge. And then, so would King.



A dazed Lewis hits the canvas against McCall

LENNOX LEWIS W 10
RAY MERCER

May 10, 1996
Madison Square Garden
New York, New York

Lewis proves his toughness against Mercer

Lewis knew what they thought of him. He had to. He knew the American press thought he was a big, hard-punching softy who more likely than not wouldn't know what to do in an old-fashioned street-fight if someone handed him a switchblade. Give him a weak-willed guy he cold bowl over with a few well-placed right hands and he looked awesome. Give him a guy like Ruddock or Tommy Morrison, whom Lewis tortured in his previous outing, and he looked like Joe Louis. (Well, okay, very little like Louis.) But what would he do against a thick-necked mug whom he couldn't hurt and who could crack back? Someone who would pressure him and maybe outlast him? Lewis probably didn't know either, and with a match against Tyson seemingly around the corner, it was time to find out. Enter Mercer.

Although he too was an Olympic champion, Mercer didn't get the attention Lewis did, or the HBO contract. After all, Larry Holmes had whipped him, and so did Jesse Ferguson, despite Mercer's alleged midfight pleas to him to go easy. And last time out, so did Holyfield. So Mercer wasn't at the top and, yes, he hated like hell to train, but he had probably the best chin in the game, and when Lewis crashed home a pair of rights in the first and Mercer grinned at him, you knew it was going to be a long night.

Mercer started quickly, easily outjabbing the taller Lewis and backing him up. But he started huffing around the fourth round, and then Lewis took control. He outworked Mercer and outpunched him over the middle rounds, catching him often enough with stinging uppercuts and right hands. Mercer gritted his teeth and fought back hard, landing enough to swell up both of Lewis' eyes. Back and forth they slugged until the 10th, and there wasn't a person in the Garden who didn't know either guy could still pull it out. And it was Lewis, who the press just knew would fold in this kind of scrap, who sucked it up and took the last round on two of the three judges' cards, and with it the victory by scores of 95-95, 96-95, and 96-94. "Ray is a guy who gives pressure just like Mike Tyson," he said. "That's why I took this fight. I did enough to win." And he didn't even need a switchblade.

LENNOX LEWIS KO 5 OLIVER McCALL

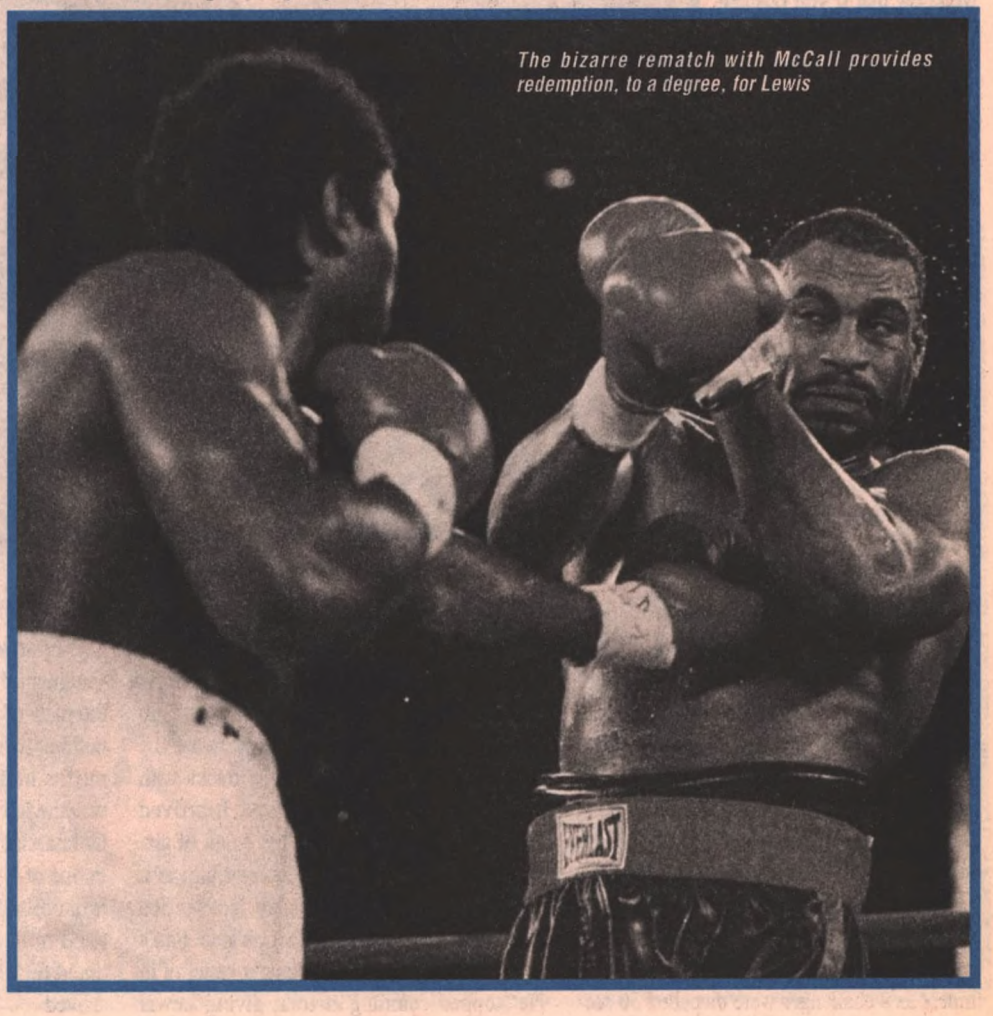
February 7, 1997
Las Vegas Hilton
Las Vegas, Nevada

When a fighter gets arrested and charged with disorderly conduct for throwing a Christmas tree through the window of a hotel lobby, and he has a fight coming up, it can mean one of two things: Either he has his game face on and can be expected to unleash some serious hurt on his opponent, or he's a certifiable nut job. Seeing as how McCall generally wasn't a good enough fighter to put a serious hurt on any top heavyweight—except for when he pancaked Lewis with a right to annex the WBC title in 1994—the second choice was the one most of the fight press went with at the time. Those who knew McCall knew he'd been in drug rehab for eight weeks and scoffed at promoter Don King's straight-faced contention that McCall trained for his rematch with Lewis for the duration of his stay.

Suffice to say that this had all the markings of a circus or something worse going in, and it didn't disappoint. Lost in all of it was Lewis' quest to avenge the only loss in an otherwise solid, if unspectacular career. But for a fighter bent on revenge, he looked awful wary of McCall's right hand over the first couple of rounds, leaping back and off-balance into the ropes whenever "The Atomic Bull" threatened to pull the trigger. Through the first two rounds, McCall did all right, rushing Lewis and landing his share. In the third, he stopped punching back and chose instead to gaze around the ring at nothing in particular. After the round, he refused to return to his corner, much to the dismay of trainer Georgie Benton.

It got worse in the fourth. McCall hardly threw a punch, and Lewis finally caught on that something was wrong. He stuck some long range jabs and rights as McCall slowly came apart. "This is one of the strangest things I've ever seen in a championship fight," observed HBO commentator Larry Merchant.

The fifth was 55 seconds old when referee Mills Lane finally stopped it with McCall, unhurt but unresponsive, getting pounded in a corner. "I frustrated him, and he couldn't handle it," Lewis said. Of course it was much more than that. It had to be. But you couldn't blame Lewis for missing the boat. Everyone has their demons, and on this night, his were vanquished.



The bizarre rematch with McCall provides redemption, to a degree, for Lewis

LENNOX LEWIS KO 1 ANDREW GOLOTA

October 4, 1997
Atlantic City Convention Center
Atlantic City, New Jersey

Once upon a time, Golota was still considered a legitimate heavyweight contender. It was long before he quit against Michael Grant and we found out the real reason, if we suspected it all along, why he twice fouled out against Bowe. It was before we knew that if you pushed Golota hard enough and made him ask himself the question all fighters ask themselves at some point—"Am I willing to endure agony for victory?"—he would fold, either by fouling, as he did against Bowe, or simply quitting, as he did against Grant.

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Lewis crushes supposed tough guy Golota

The Golota who showed up to the arena 30 minutes before his fight with Lewis was still a question mark. As he showed against Bowe, he could fight, especially for a big, Eastern European heavyweight. The low blows? Maybe he was just a nasty, dirty S.O.B. with a decided mean streak. If that was the case, all the better. Then he'd definitely give Lewis a fight, and that would be a nice change after Lewis' last dance, when referee Mills Lane had to turn the hose on Henry Akinwande to get him to stop hugging Lewis and then disqualify him when that didn't work. This time Lewis would have a big, strapping contender in front of him who probably didn't even know how to clinch.

Any illusions we had about Golota's worthiness as a challenger were dispelled 30 seconds in when a booming right hand sent him lurching into a corner. Lewis swarmed, and a four-punch combination—left uppercut, right cross, left uppercut, right cross—sent him tumbling to the canvas, where he wore the look of a man who's tied to the tracks with the train bearing down on him. It arrived after Golota struggled up at the count of six. Seconds later, Lewis was clubbing him in a corner, and down he went again. Referee Joe Cortez started to count, got a look at Golota's sorry, contorted mug, and thought better of it. He stopped counting at four, giving Lewis the win at 1:35 of the round.

"I just wanted to go out there and make a statement that I'm the best heavyweight on the planet," Lewis said. "Golota's never seen nothing like me. I wanted to get rid of all the misfits in the heavyweight division, and he was the last one on my list." Soon afterward, Golota claimed a pain injection he received in one of his knees moments before the fight immobilized him. Nonsense. Lewis' right hand immobilized him. We couldn't have asked for a stronger statement that Lewis had arrived.

LENNOX LEWIS KO 5 SHANNON BRIGGS

March 28, 1998
Atlantic City Convention Center
Atlantic City, New Jersey

Sometimes, a fighter's market value and popularity can be improved if he shows a little vulnerability. Lewis had his share of shaky moments in the past—against Bruno and Mercer, and, of course, McCall—but during his slaughter of Golota, he looked close to awesome. The problem with that was even when Lewis was destroying someone, he wasn't overly exciting doing it, the way Tyson was, for instance. He just didn't exhibit the kind of malice one needs to make blowouts breathtaking. He needed to add something to spice up his game.

Lewis found what he needed when Briggs, a 12-1 underdog, landed a scorcher of a left hook in the first round, and Lewis lurched sideways, off-balance and wobbly. A look of sheer panic overtook his face, and suddenly Briggs, who simply doesn't have the confidence to be patient, was all over him, hacking away with double hooks and right hands, and it was all Lewis could do to stay upright. A right sent Lewis loopy again, and he turned his back to Briggs and almost fell into a cornerpost before squelching the barrage with a hard clinch.

"I always said that it was going to be a much better fight than people expected," said Emanuel Steward, Lewis' trainer. "But it was a little too exciting for me." The crowd of almost 10,000 didn't mind, and Lewis brought them, along with Briggs, crashing back to earth in the third when he started landing right-hand bombs. Briggs visibly wilted, but he kept things interesting by throwing a hook every so often, and more than a couple found the mark.

In the fourth, Lewis wobbled the challenger with a hook of his own, then twice dropped him with thunderous rights to the head. Another one-two sent Briggs down again in the fifth, and by this time he was as exhausted as he was hurt. When he swung and missed a haymaker of a left and flopped to the canvas, referee Frank Cappuccino stopped it 1:45 into the round.

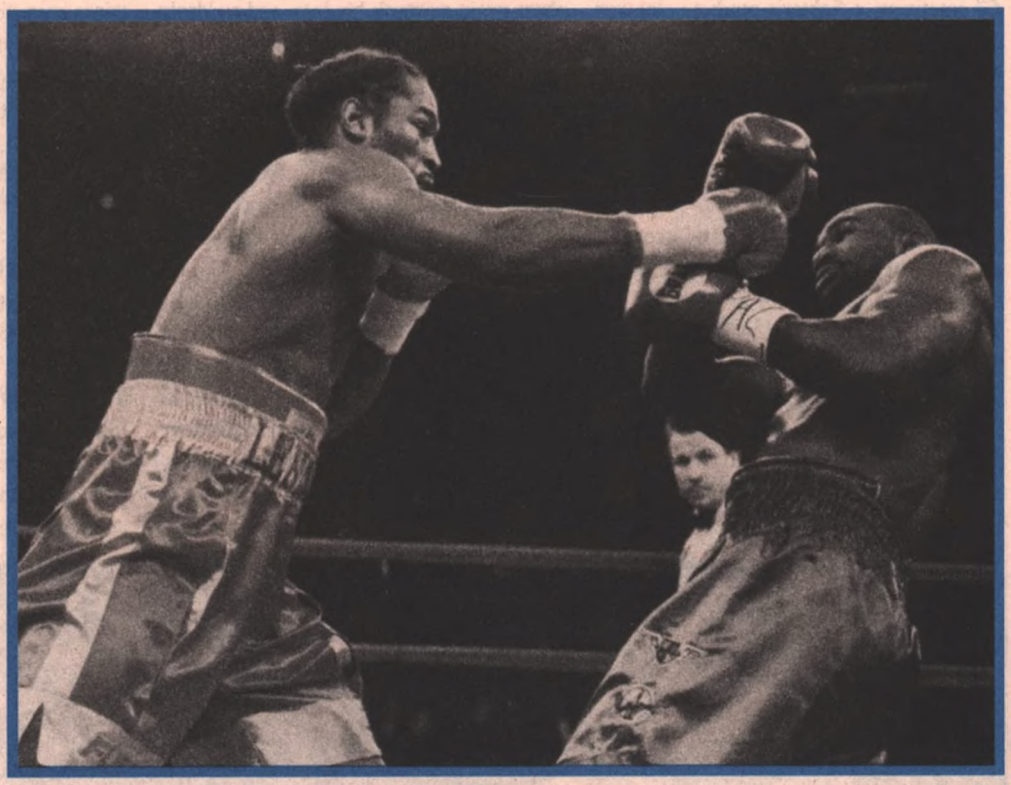
In the end, Lewis had done more than just defend the WBC belt in the most exciting fight he'd staged in years. He also claimed the linear heavyweight title and, in the process, learned a valuable lesson: A little vulnerability goes a long way.

Lewis becomes linear champ in a thriller with Briggs

Photo by Will Hart/HBO

LENNOX LEWIS D 12 EVANDER HOLYFIELD

March 13, 1999
Madison Square Garden
New York, New York



Lewis dominates Holyfield en route to a bogus draw

Regardless of which side of the fence you sat on, this was an easy fight to call. Holyfield supporters knew he'd win big. It didn't matter that he'd looked awful against Vaughn Bean last time out, or that he was 35 years old with more hard miles on his odometer than a 1973 Dodge Dart. What mattered was that he twice slew the dragon that was Mike Tyson, and also convincingly avenged a 1994 loss to Michael Moorer. Holyfield would win because he was a warrior and warriors don't lose to tea-sipping, chess-playing Brits who speak far too politely to call themselves fighters. Besides, he had God on his side. The Big Guy himself, according to Holyfield, told him he'd stop Lewis in three rounds.

Lewis supporters, on the other hand, knew Holyfield had trouble with great big guys—remember the Bowe fights, and to a lesser degree the ones against Larry Holmes and George Foreman—and Lewis was bigger than any of them. They figured there was no way the old man would get past Lewis' jab, so long as Lewis remembered to use it. And if Holyfield did get by it, he'd have that thunderous right to deal with. Either way, one thing was for sure: For the first time since Bowe deposited the WBC belt in its rightful place in 1993, there would emerge by night's end a single heavyweight champion.

So nearly 22,000 hopefuls filled the Garden hoping to see a replay of Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier I, 28 years later almost to the day. They didn't get it. Instead they got an old, tired Holyfield getting beaten up and worked over by a cautious Lewis, who was content just to keep Holyfield on the end of the jab. Who could blame him? When something works, keep working it. Holyfield went for it in the third, like God told him to, but when Lewis didn't fold, everything dried up. By the end, Lewis had connected on 348 punches compared to just 130 for Holyfield, according to CompuBox, and even if it wasn't Ali-Frazier I, or even especially competitive, at least the title would be unified and we now knew for sure who was the best heavyweight in all the land.

Okay, so one out of two isn't bad. Judges Eugenia Williams, Larry O'Connell, and Stanley Christodoulou became authors of perhaps the most nauseating chapter in the history of heavyweight title officiating when they revealed their scores to be 115-113 Holyfield, 115-115, and 116-113, Lewis. "I thought I was in complete control the whole fight," Lewis said. "I can't believe the outcome." Neither could we, but we knew who the heavyweight champion was, even if God and two judges didn't.

LENNOX LEWIS KO 2 MICHAEL GRANT

April 29, 2000
Madison Square Garden
New York, New York

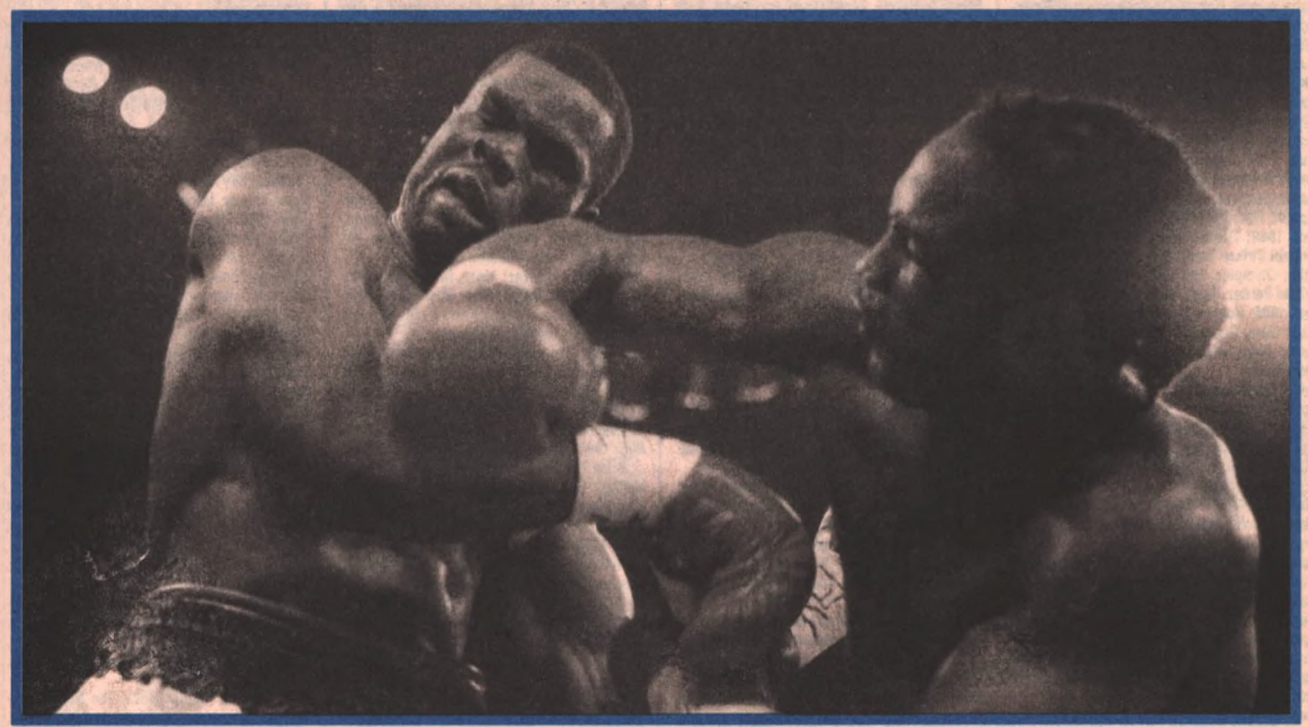
Lewis must have felt so disrespected during the last few days before his title defense against Grant. Though he was a healthy betting favorite going in, more than a few fight press members, "experts," they like to be called, picked the challenger to upset him. How could they think such a thing? A novice like Grant, who'd had only 20 amateur fights, beating an Olympic champion? A guy who hadn't beaten a single top-five contender defeating the undisputed heavyweight champion, who had vanquished virtually every heavyweight of his era? What were they thinking?

Well, they were thinking that styles make fights and that Grant could weather Lewis' early thunder, then take him to the later rounds, and work him over when Lewis' wind failed. They were thinking that Grant was probably, at worst, the third-best heavyweight in the world, and that Lewis, at 34 years old and fresh off of his meetings with Evander Holyfield, might be ready for the taking by a young, hungry challenger who could match him in size and strength. They thought Lewis' days as a fearsome slugger might be over, that he'd become for good the gun-shy jabber we'd seen in the Holyfield fights. They thought that maybe this time Lewis would fold.

They thought wrong.

The fight wasn't two minutes old when Grant, who thought his best chance was to rush Lewis, was sitting on his rump courtesy of a stiff right to the temple. He lumbered up at five and soon was sent careening into a corner, all but legless. Before the round ended, Lewis put him on his back with a thudding one-two. "Every time I hit him, he went down," Lewis said. "So I kept hitting him." Good strategy.

Lewis let Grant make it through most of the second round before holding him in place with his left then nearly decapitating him with a right uppercut. Illegal? Hell yes. Effective? Yes again. Grant collapsed like a giant house of cards and didn't come close to beating the count of referee Arthur Mercante Jr., who finished it up at 2:53 of the round. So much for Lewis being on the down side, so much for the dull tactician. So much for Lewis not being able to handle someone bigger and stronger. So much for the experts. Again. ■



Still going strong at 34, Lewis crushes Grant

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May 1992: James Toney—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Myung Woo Yuh, Khaosai Galaxy, Rocky Graziano, Billy Soose, Roy Jones, James Warring, Duran-Chavez, Marvin Hagler (color).

June 1992: What Now? Boxing Without Mike Tyson. Plus: Buck Smith, Liston-Foreman, Billy Graham, Holmes-Mercer, Enrique Pinder, Hilario Zapata, Toney-Tiberi, Benny Lynch, Tony DeMarco, Tyson centerfold (color).

July 1992: Does Larry Holmes Deserve A Title Shot? Plus: Nelson-Fenech II, Tracy Patterson, Kelley-Dorsey, fat fighters, Buchanan-Camacho, Holmes-Ali (color).

Aug. 1992: Holyfield-Holmes Prefight. Holmes: "I See Me Takin' Holyfield Outta There." Plus: Iran Barkley, Herbie Hide, George Foreman, Tex Cobb, Carnival of Champions, Harry Greb, Haugen-Mancini, Oscar De La Hoya, Gene Tunney (color).

Sept. 1992: Chavez: Unbeaten At 80-0, But What If He Had To Face These Guys? Plus: Bobby Czyz, Genaro Hernandez, Norris-Taylor, Tommy Gibbons, Sugar Ray Leonard's career, Sugar Ray Robinson (color).

Oct. 1992: The Supreme Dream: The Heavyweight Hopes Of The Heavyweight Hopefuls. Plus: Kevin Kelley, All-Time Top 10: South Africa, Meldrick Taylor, Sharmba Mitchell, Bob Foster, Eder Jofre, Max Baer (color).

Nov. 1992: Is Riddick Bowe The Next Heavyweight Champion? Plus: Morrison-Hipp, Canizales-Chandler, Chavez-Camacho preview, Australia Best of Nation, Tyson speaks from prison, Corbett-Sullivan (color), Tracy Patterson, Pat Barrett, Knockout Brown.

Feb. 1993: America's Tribute To The Brown Bomber: Joe Louis. Plus: Virgil Hill, Junior Jones, Roger Mayweather, Chicago boxing, Orlando Zulueta, Jose Napoles (color).

March 1993: From Question Man To Answer Man: Riddick Bowe Leaves No Doubts. Plus: Lennox Lewis, Lopez-Gamache, Frank Bruno, Rocky Kansas, Frank Fletcher, Crisanto Espana, Bowe-Lewis (color).

April 1993: Riddick Bowe: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: "Grand Slam" fight card, Toney-Barkley preview, Morris East, Joe Louis-John Henry Lewis, All-Time Top 10: Argentina, Fighters of the Year (color).

May 1993: Oscar De La Hoya's Sprint To The Title: Is He Good Enough *Now*? Plus: Carbajal-Gonzalez preview, Lennox Lewis, THE RING Poll, Freddie Pendleton.

Aug. 1993: A Ring Exclusive: Julio Cesar Chavez Speaks Out. Plus: Bobby Czyz, 10 hardest punchers, Rafael Ruelas, Carmen Basilio, closing of the Fifth Street Gym, Sugar Ray Leonard (color).

Oct. 1993: Tommy Morrison: Good Enough To Beat Big George, But Will He Win The Heavyweight Title? Plus: Riddick Bowe, Mike Capriano, Billy Conn-Joe Louis, All-Time Top 10: Puerto Rico, Charles Murray.

April 1994: Michael Carbajal: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Brown-Norris, Kevin Kelley, Ceferino Garcia, Oscar De La Hoya, Tunney Hunsaker, Spinks-Foster.

Aug. 1994: Bowe's Back! Determined To Do It Again. Plus: Eric Griffin, Pernell Whitaker, Ray Mercer, Roger Donoghue, State of the Game (midterm report), All-Time Top 10: The Philippines.

Oct. 1994: Rating The Champs: Whitaker & Toney Lead The Field ... But Roy Jones Is Closing Fast. Plus: Oscar De La Hoya, Meldrick Taylor, Rafael Ruelas, Curtis Cokes.

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Dec. 1994: Fighting-Mad! James Toney Just Wants To Beat People Up. Plus: Duran & Robinson, Don King, Mike McCallum, Injuries (part II), Tom Molineaux.

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May 1995: The State Of The Game. Plus: Olzubek & Arbachakov, Gonzalez-Kelley, Pazienza-Duran II, All-Time Top 10: France.

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July 1995: Pernell Whitaker: *The Ring* Makes "Pound-For-Pound" An Official Title. Plus: Riddick Bowe, Ike Quartey, Benn-McClellan, TV prospects, Hector Acero-Sanchez, Harry Matthews, What If ... Robinson-Burley.

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Feb. 1996: Bowe's The Man (For Now), But Is He Man Enough For Tyson? Also: Lennox Lewis, Hamed-Barrera, Paul Banke, Vince Phillips, boxing on Madison Ave., What If ... Leonard-Pryor.

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Special Analysis:

THE 10 BEST REFEREES IN THE GAME

By Kevin Iole

Richard Steele said he is proudest of the very thing that he is reviled for by many boxing fans.

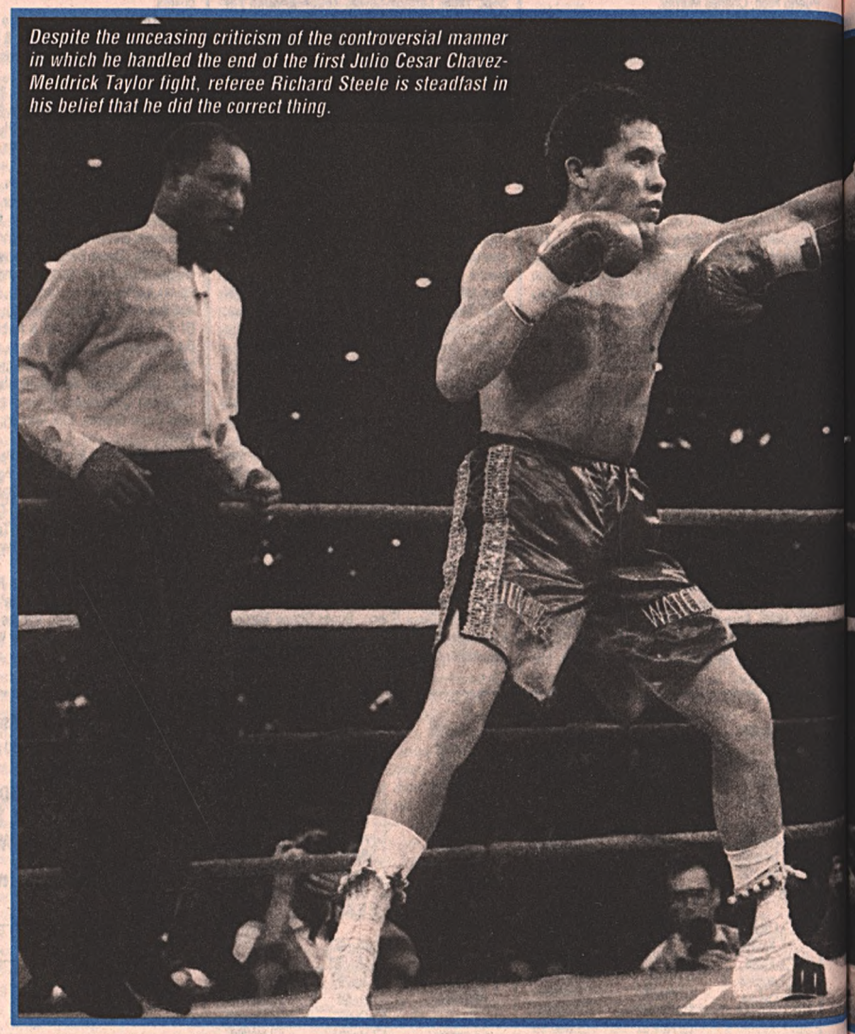
Steele, who has been the third man in more world championship fights than any referee ever, said he always goes into the ring with a safety-first attitude. That has earned him the thanks and praise of many fighters and the admiration of the state athletic commissions for which he has worked. It has not, however, stopped Steele from being vilified by boxing fans, who see him as the man who has stopped far too many fights too quickly and deprived them of seeing decisive endings. Steele, who will always be remembered for stopping the Meldrick Taylor-Julio Cesar Chavez bout with just two seconds remaining, said he has no qualms.

"In baseball, a great umpire can call a pitch a strike when it's a ball or call a guy out who is really safe, but in the end, what's the difference? Life will go on," Steele said. "But in this business, one bad call and you're playing with somebody's life. You have to remember that."

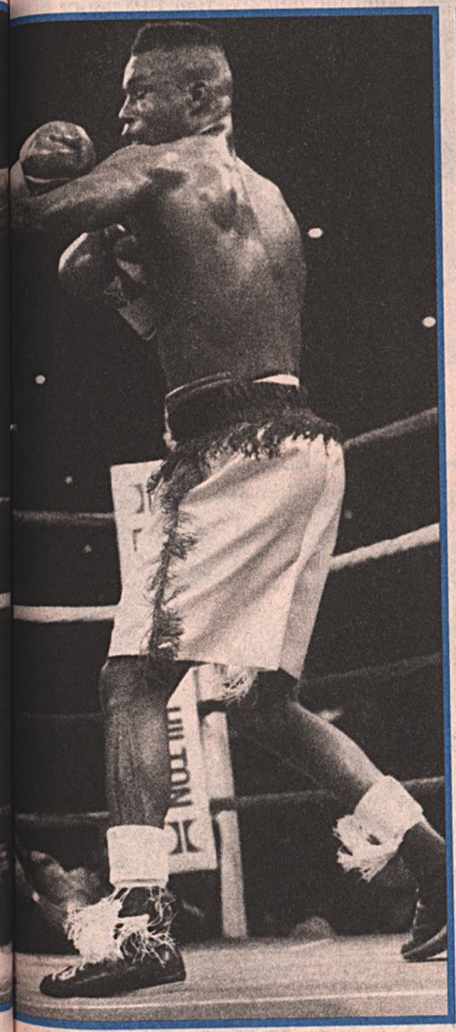
Despite his reputation among the fans, Steele is as good as they come. He has good judgment, clearly has the respect of the fighters, stays away from the action when he should, and is not hesitant to discipline a fighter. For all of the above reasons, he tops this observer's list of the top 10 active referees.

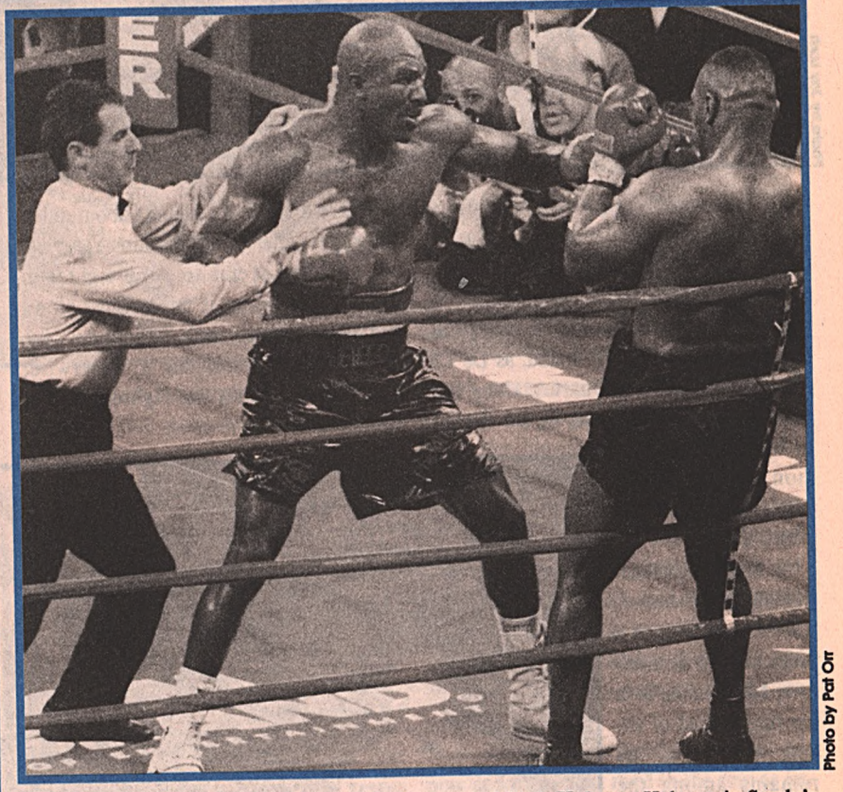
It's one of the most difficult lists to choose. As Steele said, one poor decision can lead to a tragedy, but a quick stoppage will bring tremendous amounts of second-guessing. A referee has to be able to stop a fight at any time if he senses a fighter is in danger of being seriously hurt. But he also has an obligation to the boxers and to the fans to allow a fight to go on if it can be reasonably determined that the fighter under fire is safe, can defend himself, and still has a chance to come back.

When making the following selections, only referees who consistently work major matches were considered. It's entirely possible that the best referee in the world is currently working amateur bouts or professional clubfights in the boondocks. But if that's the case, he or she will have to wait for another ranking, at a later date.



Despite the unceasing criticism of the controversial manner in which he handled the end of the first Julio Cesar Chavez-Meldrick Taylor fight, referee Richard Steele is steadfast in his belief that he did the correct thing.





Mitch Halpern became well-known when he worked the first Evander Holyfield-Mike Tyson fight in 1996. Many think he's the best young referee in the game, but he still makes an occasional mistake.

Photo by Pat Orr

1. **Richard Steele** Steele saved the day at the Mike Tyson-Frans Botha fight in January 1999. Tyson was making yet another comeback and came into the ring full of rage. At one point, he tried to snap Botha's arm during a clinch. But Steele didn't allow the situation to get out of control. He took points away, disciplined Tyson severely, and the fight went on without incident until the one-punch, fifth-round knockout that left Botha rolling around on the canvas.

Sometimes, a referee can get himself too involved and doesn't let the fighters fight. That's not Steele. As long as they are going at it, Steele is content to watch from a distance. But when the rough stuff begins or one fighter begins to take a dangerously decided edge, Steele is quick to react.

True, he may have stopped a fight or two a punch early, but night after night, Steele is consistently the best referee in the sport.

2. **Mitch Halpern** Halpern is Steele's protege and the man who is being groomed to become the best. There are those in the sport who would already point to Halpern as boxing's top referee. Clearly, he moves well and has the strength to deal with even the biggest fighters.

Halpern's coming-out party was Evander Holyfield-Tyson I, when he was surprisingly given the nod by the Nevada State Athletic Commission, and officiated a flawless bout. That fight moved him into the upper echelon, but Halpern hasn't been without incident. He struggled in the Yory Boy Campas-Oba Carr

Firm but fair: Veteran ref Joe Cortez has been at it for 20 years and continues to improve.

Photo by Jay Lash

fight earlier this year, which he allowed to become a foulfest. But by and large, Halpern is consistently excellent.

Many referees would have jumped in and stopped the Oscar De La Hoya-Ike Quartey fight in the 12th round, as De La Hoya was pounding Quartey along the ropes. Halpern was leaning in, but elected to wait, and his decision was vindicated when Quartey finished with a flurry.

3. **Stanley Christodoulou** Christodoulou, 56, is as active as a judge as he is as a referee, but when he is in the ring instead of sitting beside it, he remains among the sport's elite. It is clear the South African understands the game. He has a knack for getting the fighters to punch their way out of clinches, thereby making for more sustained action. He is, however, willing and able to get between clinching, brawling fighters and pry them apart, getting the action restarted.

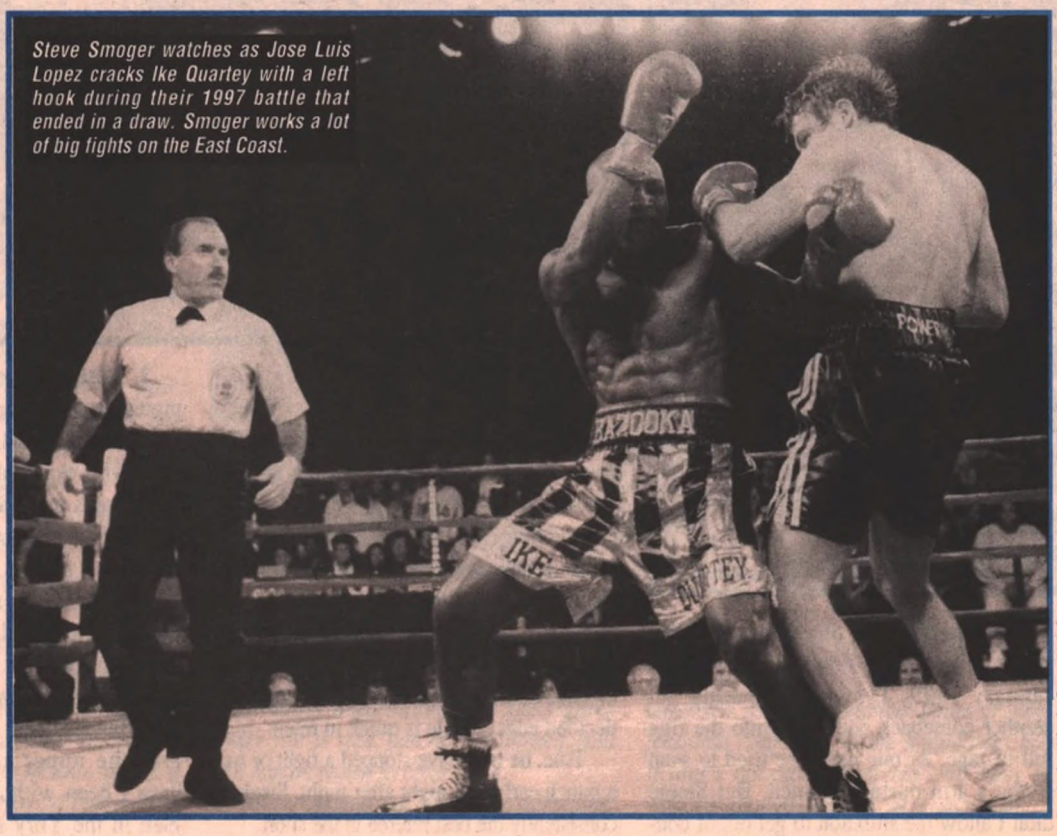
There are few complaints about quick stoppages when Christodoulou referees, but he never seems to put a fighter in danger. If a fighter is taking head blows and doesn't punch back, he's as decisive as they come in stopping it. Otherwise, he's content to let the fighters be the attraction.

4. **Joe Cortez** He's firm but fair, which he tells us before every fight. Cortez is also an excellent referee and could easily be number one on this list. Think of the last time Cortez refereed a fight that got out of control; difficult, isn't it?

He is in superb shape and doesn't hesitate to use his strength to get between fighters. He moves well, allowing him a clear view of the proceedings without becoming a part of it. When he warns fighters, they take it seriously because he has established a reputation as a no-nonsense referee. Some believe Cortez took a point too quickly from IBF junior middleweight titlist Fernando Vargas in his successful title defense against Quartey, but after the point was deducted, there were no problems, were there?

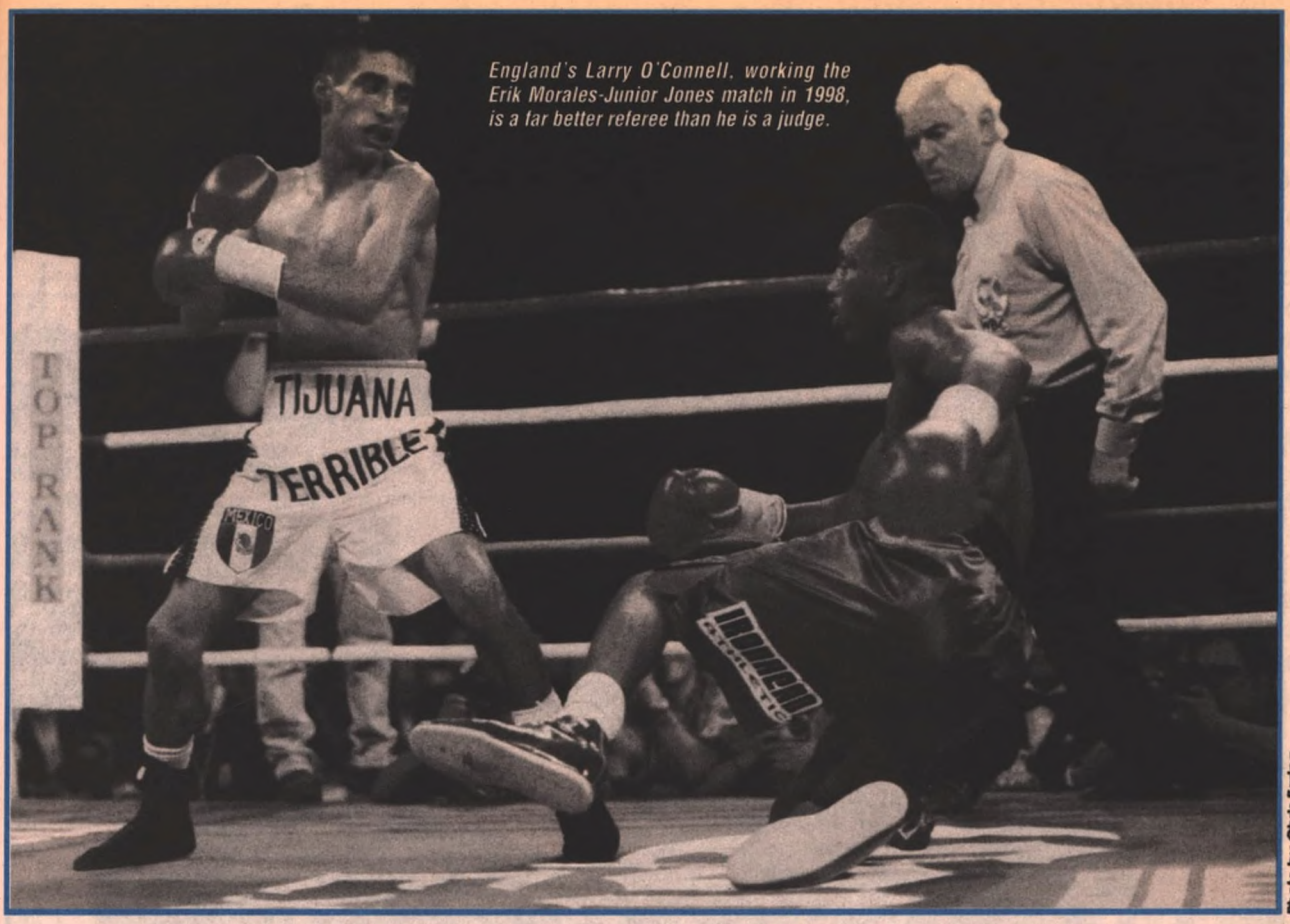
Cortez, who will be 47 in October, has been officiating at the highest level for almost 20 years, but if anything, he is getting better.

5. **Laurence Cole** The son of an excellent referee, Dick Cole, Laurence is a budding star among referees. He's done some big fights—Genaro Hernandez-Azumah Nelson, Erik Morales-Daniel



Steve Smoger watches as Jose Luis Lopez cracks Ike Quartey with a left hook during their 1997 battle that ended in a draw. Smoger works a lot of big fights on the East Coast.

Photo by Marty Rosengarten



England's Larry O'Connell, working the Erik Morales-Junior Jones match in 1998, is a far better referee than he is a judge.

Photo by Chris Farina

Zaragoza—as well as two De La Hoya bouts, but the best is yet to come. Cole clearly has the fighters' safety at heart, but he shows good judgment and hasn't made the mistake of stopping a fight far too soon.

He is a good athlete who is decisive. The fighters know he is the boss, but they also know he's not looking to make a name for himself or to get more air time than they do. He does his job in a workmanlike, professional manner, but perhaps the best thing that can be said about Cole is that a lot of the time he's not noticed.

6. **Steve Smoger** Smoger consistently gets big fights on the East Coast, and shows time and again he's up to the task. He sometimes is a little domineering—we want to see more of the fights, Steve, and less of you—but is without question in charge when he's in the ring.

At 50, Smoger remains in good shape and has the agility to steer clear of the fighters. He has the courage to take a point, even in the biggest fights, so the boxers themselves know they must follow the rules or risk being penalized. He doesn't favor the so-called house fighter and has a knack for stepping in at the proper times. A true professional, Smoger will always do a competent job and will let the fighters decide the issue. And that's all you can ask.

7. **Larry O'Connell** O'Connell is a frequent judge and was one of the three who worked the first Holyfield-Lennox Lewis fight. He scored it a draw in a fight Lewis clearly won, and, for that and other transgressions, would make no one's list of top active judges.

It's a different story as a referee. The Englishman understands the game, keeps the action moving, and commands respect in the ring. Fighters respond well to him, and rarely does one of his fights get out of control. Most of the bouts he referees are in Europe, which is a shame because the sport would be better if he refereed more fights here. Athletic commissions looking for a fair, competent ref could do far worse than to choose O'Connell. Just make sure you don't pick him to judge, too, fellas.

8. **Lou Moret** Moret has gotten consistently better and is used in many of the big cards in California. He got the plumb assignment when he was tabbed to work the De La Hoya-Shane Mosley fight, the biggest-money fight ever in California.

It was a well-deserved selection. Moret still moves well and he has a way about him that says, "I'm in charge." He is not heavy-handed, though, and is content to watch if the boxers cooperate. Moret knows the rules and applies them well, and he will undoubtedly earn more big-time assignments.

9. **Rudy Battle** Battle is almost 65 now and he isn't as fluid in the ring as he once was. Still, he is a very solid referee. His years of experience have given him a good perspective and rarely do fighters complain that he didn't give them a chance. He remains decisive in his stoppages, but the fighters know they will be given the opportunity to fight their way out of trouble.

Battle talks to the fighters frequently, often urging them to fight or warning them about fouls without interfering in the action.

Because of his age and his mobility, his

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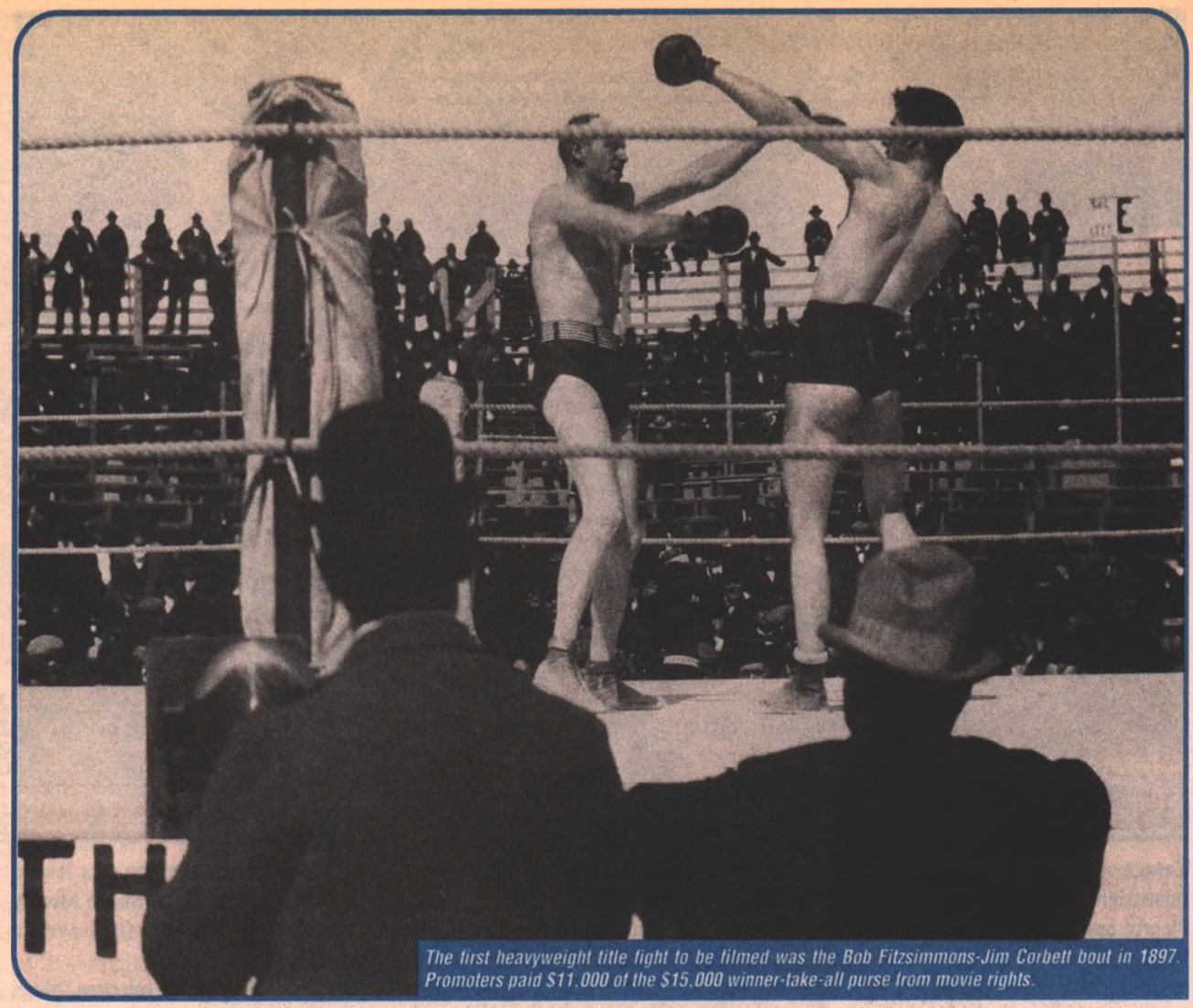


The first heavyweight title fight to be filmed was the Bob Fitzsimmons-Jim Corbett bout in 1897. Promoters paid $11,000 of the $15,000 winner-take-all purse from movie rights.

The *Reel* Deal!

HOW FIGHT FILMS REVOLUTIONIZED THE BUSINESS

By Eric Bottjer

Bob Fitzsimmons looked up at the camera and frowned. The 200-pound cyclops staring back at him was mounted on a wooden platform that overlooked an odd gathering of Mexican bandits, Texas Rangers, 182 ticket buyers, Fitzsimmons, and opponent Peter Maher.

They were gazing into the eye of boxing's future. Fitzsimmons was not impressed. "No movin' pictures," the Cornishman muttered to promoter Dan Stuart, who organized the small fiasco on a Texas sandbar in February 1896 and billed it for the world's heavyweight championship. The promoter pointed at the sky and told Fitz not to worry. It was too overcast to film the fight.

Not convinced of Stuart's word and still muttering about not being compensat-

ed for film rights, Fitz shuffled out and knocked Maher cold in 95 seconds. He allowed himself a smile afterward, not because Stuart had declared him world heavyweight champion—Fitz knew that semi-retired James Corbett still held that title with the public—but because Stuart's attempt to film the bout was foiled.

"I told you there'd be no movin' pictures," he crowed afterward.

Fitzsimmons was nearly the first talent holdout for movie residuals in history. And he had a just case. Just 17 months prior, in September 1894, Corbett boxed a pathetic fellow named Peter Courtney in front of the Thomas Edison-invented Kinescope inside a tiny makeshift theater in New Jersey. The theater housed a 12-foot ring, was painted all black on the inside, and was roofless to allow sunlight to shine on its filmed subjects. Enterprising Virginia college students rented Edison's camera and studio, paying the champion an astronomical $4,700 (John L. Sullivan was initially approached, but demanded $25,000). Six rounds were recorded, varying in length from one to two minutes, depending on how long the film lasted, before capturing a Corbett knockout. Courtney, the "heavyweight champion of New Jersey," earned $250 for his pain.

The Corbett film, along with a fight between Jack Cushing and Michael Leonard, played to captive audiences in New York City peep shows.

"It was very expensive to produce those first films," said fight film historian Steve Lott, "but they made money. Boxing, as you know, was very popular back then and something the general public was interested in. Edison didn't film boxing because he was a fan, but because he was a businessman. He saw a profit-making venture."

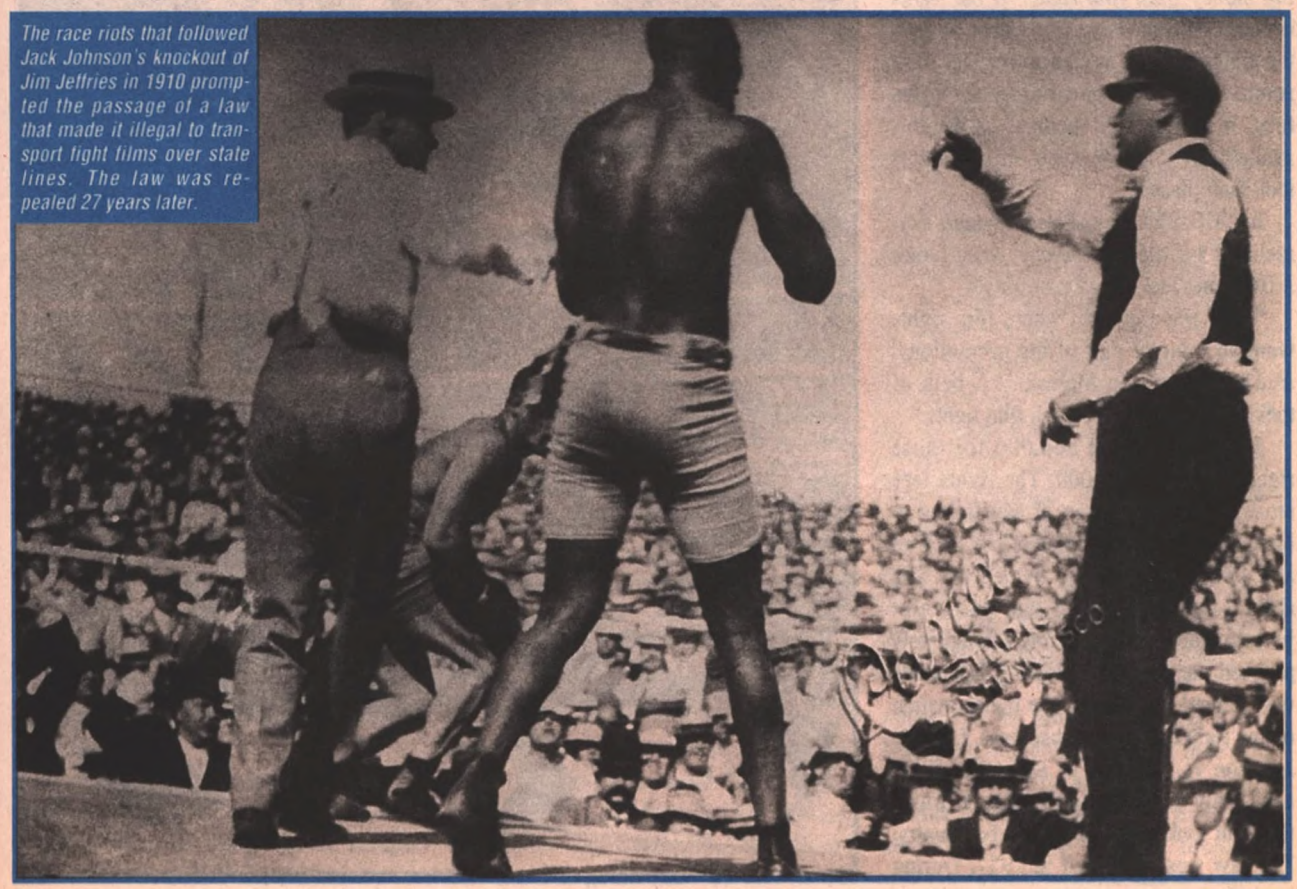
Edison's invention changed the business of boxing, pumping in new dollars, just as television later saturated the sport with money. Championship fights could be organized by promoters, rather than by backers of the fighters. Boxers could get guaranteed purses, rather than fight for winner-take-all stakes from money raised primarily through gambling. Two years prior to the Courtney bout, Corbett had to risk $10,000 of his own backers' money when challenging for the title. Against Courtney, the new champion had earned nearly half that in a "fight" so easy that Corbett plainly laughed at times. In addition, Corbett garnered $150 a week for as long as the film showed, which ultimately netted him more than $20,000, his career-high purse.

Corbett liked the idea of fighting in front of the cameras, as did Fitzsimmons, but both knew they were now movie stars as well as boxers, and each demanded payment. When the pair finally met on St. Patrick's Day in 1897, Stuart guaranteed the winner an all-time high purse of $15,000, none of which came from the fighters' backers. Stuart's offer was subsidized by an $11,000 payment for the film rights by one of the partners in the Corbett-Courtney production. Corbett and Fitzsimmons demanded and received one-third each of that $11,000 payment.

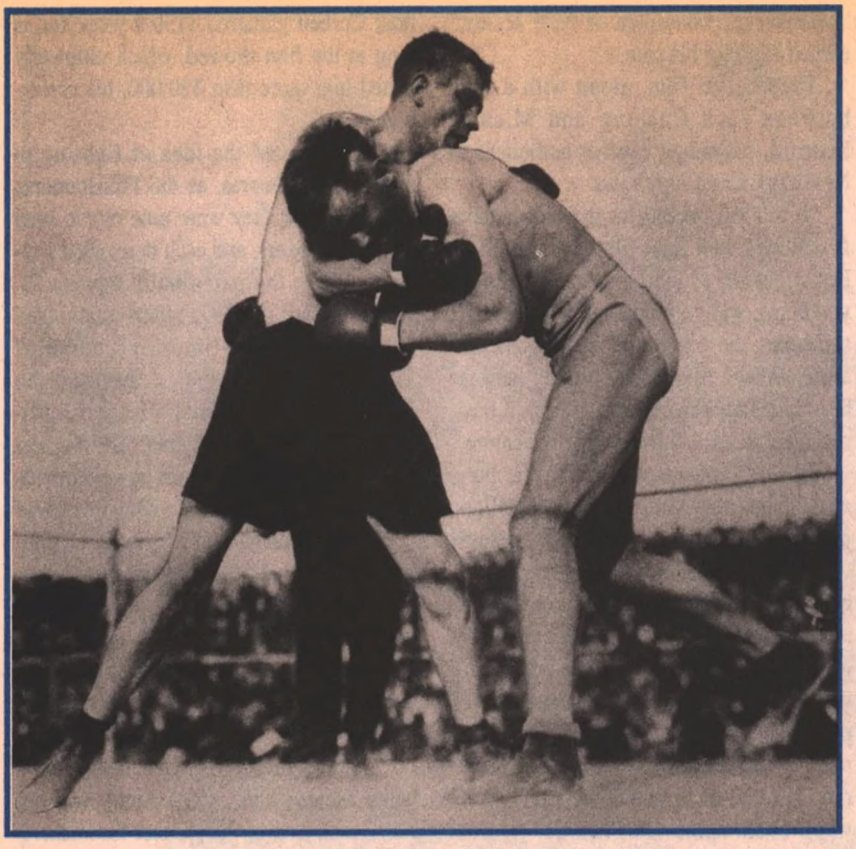
It took more than 10,000 feet of film to record Fitzsimmons's 14th-round knockout of Corbett. The film itself was 65 mm, just under twice the size of subsequent 35 mm films.

"To carry that type of film, along with a bulky camera, across the country was not easy," said Lott of the pioneer filmmakers. "Very few fights were filmed back then. Perhaps one or two a year."

That didn't stop top fighters from mak-



The race riots that followed Jack Johnson's knockout of Jim Jeffries in 1910 prompted the passage of a law that made it illegal to transport fight films over state lines. The law was repealed 27 years later.



The reputations of some old-timers such as Stanley Ketchel, pictured clinching with Billy Papke (above), have been damaged by vintage fight films. One exception is welter champ Ted "Kid" Lewis, seen nailing Johnny Brasham with a long right (below).

ing money from film rights. If the fights couldn't be filmed due to weather or cost, the fighters often agreed to reenact their combat in a studio in exchange for rights fees. If the fighters themselves weren't available to duplicate their efforts, actors took their place.

In 1910, film rights fees for boxers skyrocketed and died in one day, when James Jeffries met Jack Johnson on July 4.

"That was the fight where film rights were an integral part of the promotion," said historian Don Majeski. "A bulk of their purse was paid through film rights."

Jeffries received $66,000 for those rights, Johnson $50,000. The rights fees alone topped the purses of any fighter in boxing history. But promoters Tex Rickard and John Gleason, who owned the film rights, never recouped that particular investment. After race riots immediately plagued the country following Johnson's win, federal law banned the transportation of any fight film across state lines. Legally, Johnson vs. Jeffries, or any other fight, could only be shown in the state in which the fight took place, or out of the country. The law was rescinded in 1937. During that 27-year period, major fights were filmed and boxers were at times given rights fees, as promoters found a market in Europe.

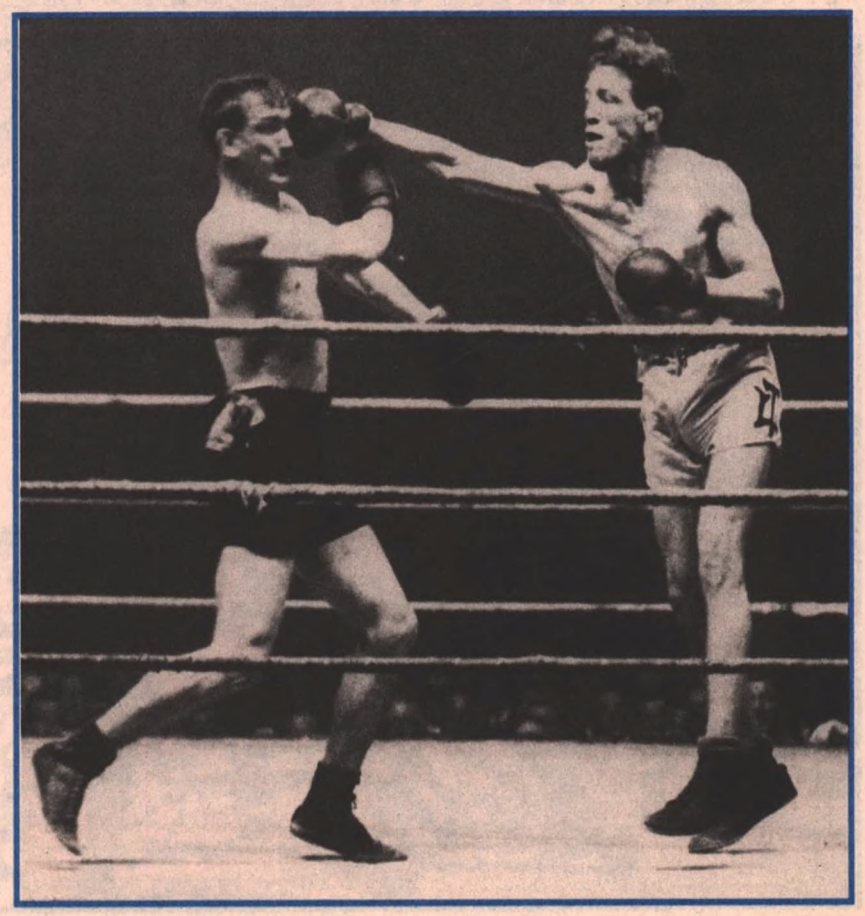
Early films changed boxing history in more than one way. During that time, fight films allowed boxers to make a handsome living. And during our time, films knocked the rose-colored glasses off historians who claimed that old-timers would whip modern boxers.

"It's preposterous to think those guys could beat today's boxers," said film buff Tony Fosco, a collector for 25 years. That view is echoed by virtually every boxing film connoisseur.

"I love the old-timers, but most of them wouldn't have a prayer against these modern guys," said New York collector Dennis Magin.

Fosco has about 1,500 films and tapes, among them the 1906 Joe Gans-Battling Nelson fight. Not the complete 42 rounds—only 38 rounds exist—but 75 minutes worth, enough for Fosco's commentary: "Very boring."

Worse is the 20-round Tommy Burns-Jack O'Brien rematch, where O'Brien sim-



Jim Jacobs and Bill Cayton once owned the largest collection of fight films in the world. Jacobs died in 1988, and Cayton recently sold the collection to ESPN, some of which can be seen on ESPN Classic.

ply ran the entire time. However, Les Darcy was ahead of his time, claimed Fosco, who has footage of the Australian great against George Chip and Jimmy Clabby. Ted "Kid" Lewis was another Fosco tabbed as a phenom.

Stanley Ketchel, on the other hand, comes out a loser on film. "I love Ketchel, but his only two films show him at his worst," said Chicago film collector Mitch Levin. "There's about 15 minutes of the fourth Billy Papke fight and it's very boring, a lot of holding. And of course the Jack Johnson fight. Ketchel certainly doesn't look like the greatest middleweight of all-time."

Very little film of the pioneers exists today, but what has been discovered is fascinating and educational. Jim Jacobs, who teamed with Bill Cayton to herd the largest collection of films ever, uncovered the nearly complete Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight.

"Jimmy had to piece the end of the fight, including the knockout, from potato-chip like fragments when he got the film," said Lott.

In 1899, Jeffries' 25-round title defense against Tom Sharkey was filmed indoors under giant, low hanging arc lamps (Jeffries later blamed the lamps for his premature baldness). The film probably still exists, as bits of it were seen in the background shot of a 1970s George C. Scott movie, *Minsky's Burlesque*, but it remains uncovered. Jacobs and Cayton did obtain crude footage of that fight shot on film inside a cigar box. That footage was the first of many bootleg fight films.

Levin and Fosco own slightly less than two minutes of poor quality footage of Jeffries' title defense against Gus Ruhlin. "The Boilermaker's" last defense, against Jack Monroe, was filmed, but is now lost to the ages.

Other early famous fights that were filmed, but are now missing (listed by year):

1901—Terry McGovern-Young Corbett, Joe Walcott-Rube Ferns

1902—Joe Gans-Frank Erne, Tommy Ryan-Kid Carte

1903—Rube Ferns-Matty Matthews

1906—Tommy Burns-Marvin Hart, Battling Nelson-Terry McGovern

1907—Jack "Twin" Sullivan-Al Kaufman

1908—Packy McFarland-Jimmy Britt, Abe Attell-Owen Moran

1909—Sam Langford-Ian Hauge

Magin said that Jacobs, whom he met in 1959 and kept in touch with over the years, claimed to have mouthwatering footage such as Jack Johnson-Jim Johnson, rounds three through seven of a Sam Langford-Sam McVey fight, 18 minutes of a Joe Jeannette-McVey fight, and parts of the 1907 Ketchel-Joe Thomas fight. None of this footage has ever been shown to the public, and one wonders if it ever will, as the Cayton-Jacobs collection was too large to catalog and is now owned by ESPN.

ESPN Classic does show snippets of the collection, most of it from the eras of Louis, Marciano, and Ali. When Cayton started in the fight film business in 1949, he obtained many old films from "the boys," as Lott calls mobsters, who owned many of the bootleg films that were made from 1910-1937. Cayton obtained exclusive rights to IBC promoted fights from 1949-1959 and purchased the Madison Square Garden collection in 1974. Among the modern-day Cayton/Jacobs acquisitions was vintage Cassius Clay footage: 10 minutes of his pro debut against Tunney Hunsaker, including prefight interviews and the weigh-in, non-televised fights against Lamar Clark, Willie Besmanoff, and George Logan, plus TV footage of

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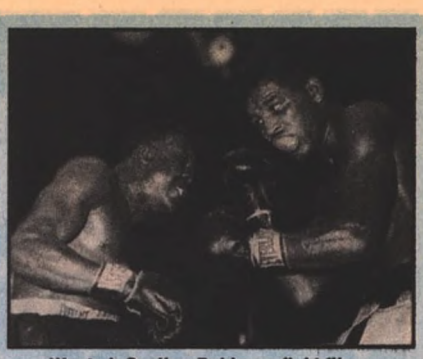


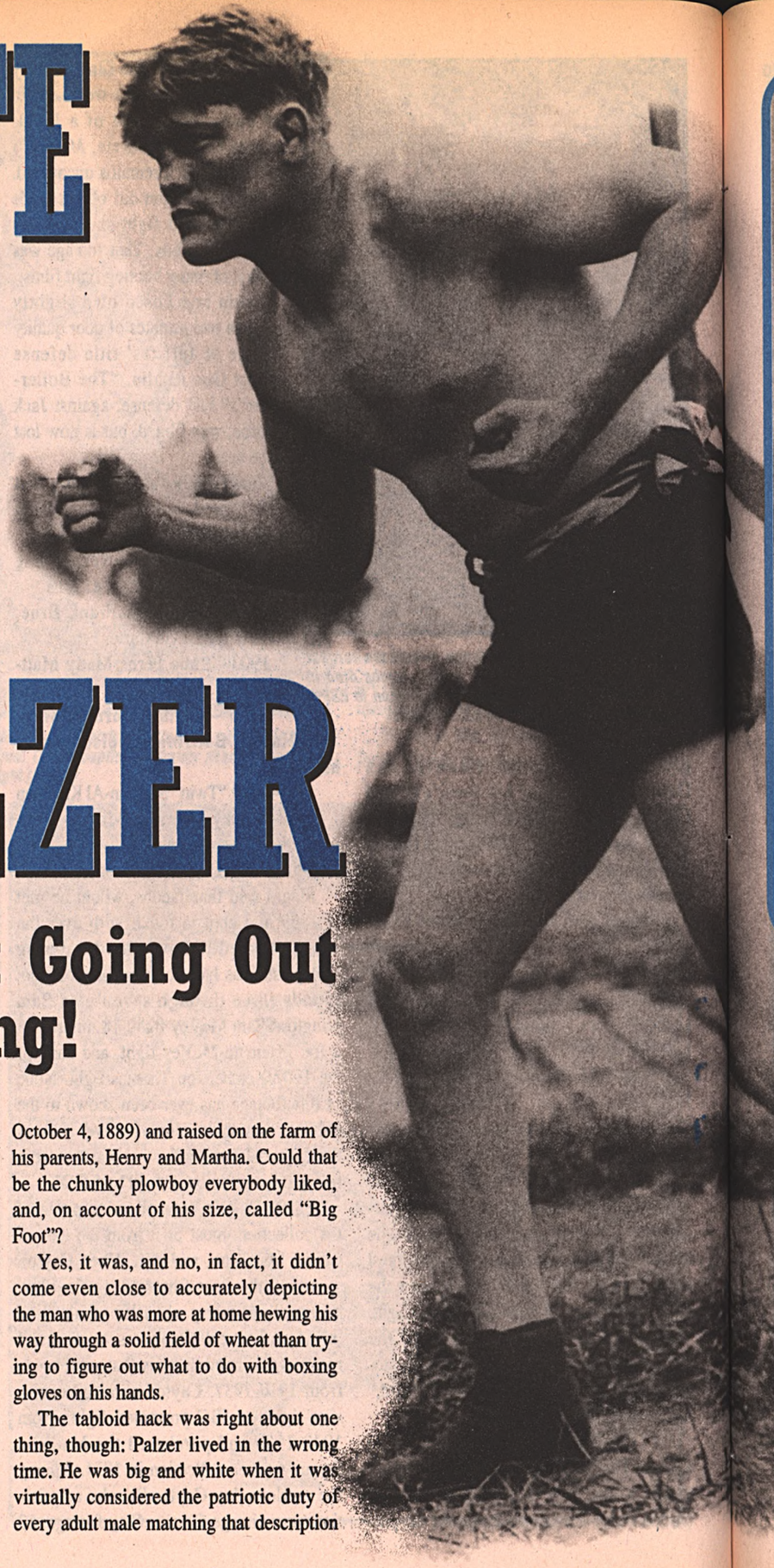
Wanted: Gavilan-Robinson fight films

LOST CLASSICS

Ten sought-after films (all except number 10 were known to be filmed):

1. Harry Greb-Gene Tunney I
   Tunney's sole loss.
2. Harry Greb-Mickey Walker
   Greb always spoke of the hot overhead lights made especially for filming this fight.
3. Ray Robinson-Kid Gavilan
   It's believed both fights were filmed, but neither has been uncovered.
4. Henry Armstrong-Lew Jenkins
   The film was advertised for theater showing and viewed on Broadway. Six Armstrong films exist; none show a knockout. An Armstrong-Jenkins discovery would change that.
5. Joe Walcott-Joe Gans
   Two legends in 20-round draw in 1904.
6. Jack Johnson-Ben Taylor
   Pre-championship Johnson, just before beating Burns (13 minutes of Johnson-Burns exists).
7. Jack Johnson-Al Kaufman
   Champion Johnson in six-round non-title fight in 1909.
8. Luther McCarty-Al Palzer
   For the white heavyweight title. McCarty would probably have been the successor to Johnson had he not died in 1914.
9. Stanley Ketchel-Jack "Twin" Sullivan
   The 1908 peak Ketchel would look good in this one.
10. Mike Tyson-Larry Sims
    The only Tyson fight not filmed (as far as we know).

WHITE HOPE AL PALZER



Talk About Going Out With A Bang!

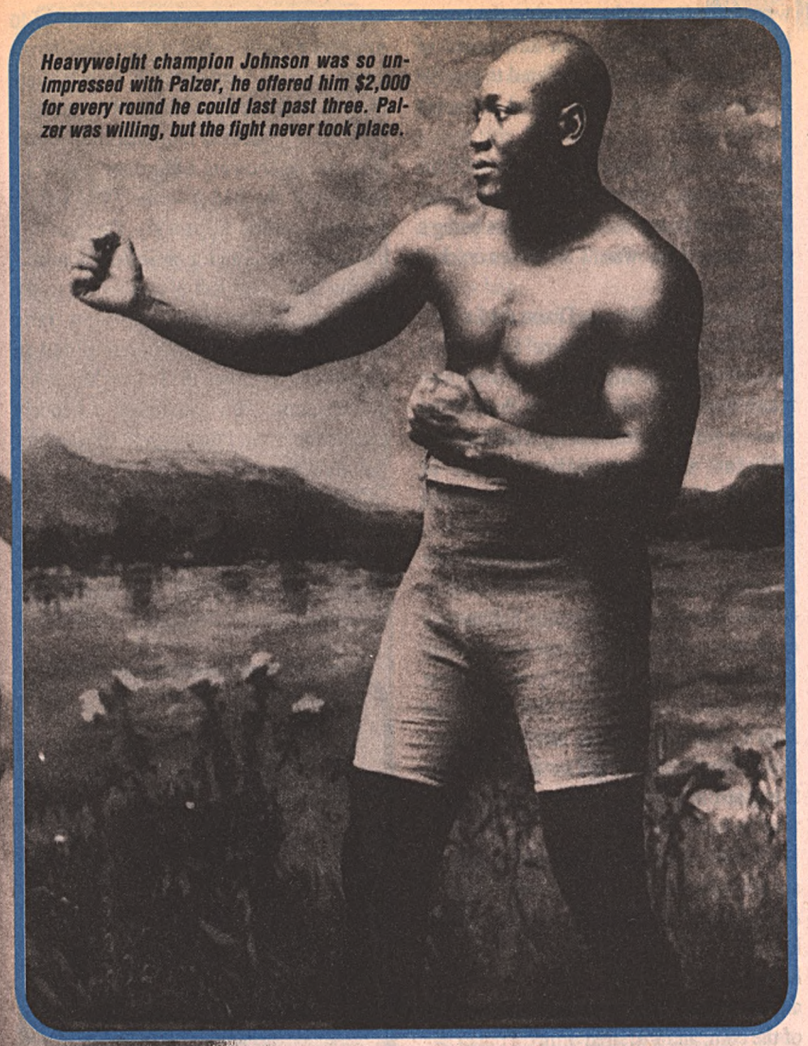
By Pete Ehrmann

"Set him back to the 18th century, place a battle ax or a mace in his hands, and he would hew his way through a solid field of opponents. Palzer is of the fiber from which kings were made in days when a man brained his way to the throne. In those times he could not possibly have fallen short of knighthood."

Those deathless words, written 88 years ago by some anonymous sportswriter, must have caused an epidemic of head scratching in Ossien, Iowa, where Albert Palzer was born (on October 4, 1889) and raised on the farm of his parents, Henry and Martha. Could that be the chunky plowboy everybody liked, and, on account of his size, called "Big Foot"?

Yes, it was, and no, in fact, it didn't come even close to accurately depicting the man who was more at home hewing his way through a solid field of wheat than trying to figure out what to do with boxing gloves on his hands.

The tabloid hack was right about one thing, though: Palzer lived in the wrong time. He was big and white when it was virtually considered the patriotic duty of every adult male matching that description



Heavyweight champion Johnson was so unimpressed with Palzer, he offered him $2,000 for every round he could last past three. Palzer was willing, but the fight never took place.

to redeem the pride missing in most of white society since Jack Johnson became heavyweight champion of the world in 1908.

As the first African-American to ever occupy the heavyweight throne added insult to injury by dating white women and driving his car too fast, the search for a Caucasian boxer to smite him down was so intense that, as John Larder once wrote, "white boys more than 6'2" tall were not safe out of their mother's sight."

In Big Foot Al's case, it beat watching the corn grow and the arguments with his dad that drove Palzer off the family farm when he was 12. In nearby Decorah, Palzer drove a livery wagon and, according to one newspaper article, "was looked upon as a big, awkward, good-natured chap who was popular with the boys of the neighborhood."

Palzer was a typical white hope—big, brave, and almost totally lacking in boxing skills. Nonetheless, his pigmentation and punch almost earned him a title fight with Jack Johnson.

After a hitch in the Navy, Palzer headed for New York City, and won a couple of amateur bouts. His first professional match was a 10-rounder against future title challenger Frank Moran of Pittsburgh. "There was little in their performance to indicate that they will ever reach the finals in the eliminations of 'White Hopes,'" reported the *New York Times*.

The fever to develop Caucasian contenders led to the staging of white hope tournaments such as the one entered by Palzer and 10 others on May 26, 1911, at New York's National Sporting Club. Palzer was in the process of defeating 280-pound Joe Rogers in his first bout when the crowd was distracted by the appearance of none other than Jack Johnson himself.

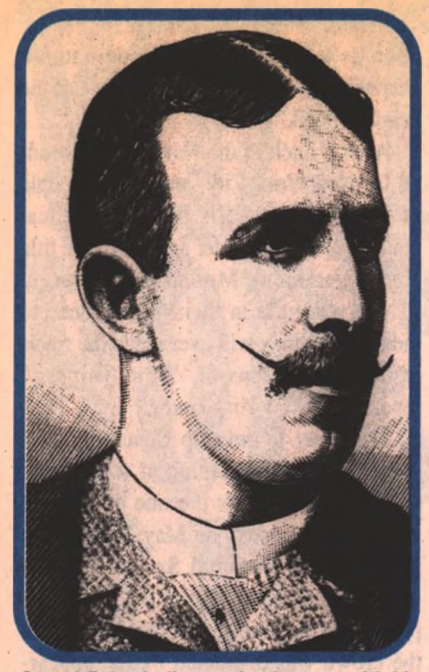
The heavyweight champion was warmly received when he climbed into the ring after Palzer was awarded a four-round decision. Interestingly enough, given the circumstances, the only cat-call heard as Johnson spoke about his willingness to fight anyone as long as "the money is really put up," was "How about Sam Langford?"—a reference to that era's other great black heavyweight.

While Palzer defeated Sailor White for the tournament championship later that night, "there was nothing uncovered by any of the prospects," reported the *Times*, "that will cause John A. Johnson to lose any sleep."

Palzer, on the other hand, was in for plenty of sleepless nights, because with his victory came an iron-clad, five-year managerial contract with the proprietor of the national Sporting Club that would cause Palzer as many headaches as the beatings he took in the ring.

Tom O'Rourke had nothing against black boxers. Indeed, he had already managed two of the best, bantamweight and featherweight champion George Dixon and welterweight champion Joe Walcott. But, true to his profession, O'Rourke's favorite color was green, and he was more than willing to go along with public demand for white heavyweights as long as there was money in it.

Along with his complexion, what Palzer had to recommend him was size—



One of Palzer's fiercest battles was with his manager, Tom O'Rourke, who the fighter claimed did not giving him a "square deal." O'Rourke promoted the white hope tournament that got Palzer started.

6'2" tall, 220 pounds—and a willingness to eat leather. On the debit side was the fact that, as formidable as he looked in boxing trunks, he was utterly clueless between the ropes. So much so that in the course of his bouts, Palzer often turned to his corner to find out what he should do.

"If he had brains," said Dave Smith, a well-known Australian middleweight of the time, "he'd be the greatest fighter in the world."

But Palzer had brawn and guts, and that counted for a lot, at least for a while.

"He was bleeding freely from several different parts of his face before the battle had gone very far," reported the *Times* of Palzer's August 3, 1911, contest with former amateur champion Tom Kennedy. But Big Foot plodded forward and, "after eight rounds of the fiercest battling shown by big men in New York in many months," finally caught Kennedy in the ninth and stopped him.

Kennedy easily evaded Palzer's haymakers to take the newspaper verdict in a rematch two months later, but Big Foot rebounded to knock out Al Kaufman, who'd gone 10 rounds with Johnson two years earlier and was still considered a top contender.

That made Palzer the most talked-about white hope going in 1912, although there were some Bronx cheers amidst the hosannas. Off what he'd seen and heard of Palzer, Johnson publicly offered to pay the Iowan $2,000 for every round he lasted past the third.

Palzer had all he could handle with his own manager. After knocking out Sailor White in February, he declared that being a great white hope wasn't all it was cracked up to be.

"I know why George Dixon died a pauper," Palzer told the *Police Gazette*. "I have only $60 to my name, yet I've won many thousands of dollars in the boxing game. I got $300 for beating Kaufman and $87 for whipping Sailor White in O'Rourke's Brooklyn club, although both bouts attracted big crowds.

"On the road, I have been getting a few hundred dollars now and then, while O'Rourke has been keeping big money each week. He's tried to get me to drink wine and go out with the fly set while in other cities, and told me that was what John L. Sullivan used to do to be a good fellow. But I refused, as I never drank anything stronger than tea or coffee, and I want to be fit all the time.

"I don't believe O'Rourke is on the square with me, and I'm going to break away from him. He made me sign some kind of contract once, but he never let me have a copy of it. He won't let me fight anybody unless he can get the lion's share of the coin, and I'm tired of it."

While the fighter and the manager spent the summer exchanging lawsuits, on June 28 Palzer engaged in what was considered the best heavyweight fight seen in New York up to then.

At Madison Square Garden, British heavyweight champion Billy Wells knocked down Palzer for a nine-count in the first round, but "after floundering around like a great helpless calf, with his mouth and nose shedding blood in a thick stream," Palzer came back to knock out the 40 pounds lighter Britisher in the third.

It was his last great triumph, but by summer's end Palzer was so woozy from his legal spat with O'Rourke that he decided to "go back to the farm and wait until the contract runs out" unless O'Rourke guaranteed him a "square deal." But instead, Palzer only plowed up new legal hassles. In October, he sued Frank O'Neil, chairman of the New York commission, claiming that he had paid O'Neil $800 to get him a fight with Johnson that never came off. On November 8, newspapers reported that one Ethel Fritz, of Coytsville, New Jersey, secured the release of Palzer from jail by showing a marriage certificate indicating she had become Mrs. Palzer four days earlier. Apparently, the farm boy had been locked up for breach of promise.

But that was small potatoes next to the news that same day involving Jack Johnson. He was formally indicted in Chicago for violating the federal Mann Act by transporting Bell Schreiber, a frequent companion, from Pittsburgh to Chicago for "immoral purposes."

The media immediately took it upon itself to declare Johnson an ex-champion. Not too many white folks objected. Jimmy Britt, who'd once proclaimed himself the "white lightweight champion," summed up

One of Palzer's major victories came against British heavyweight champion "Bombardier" Bill Wells. Palzer survived a first-round knockdown to stop Wells in the third round.

Ill-fated Luther McCarty scored an 18th-round knockout of Palzer for something called the "white heavyweight championship." Shortly afterward, McCarty was killed in the first round of a bout with Arthur Pelkey.

the prevailing attitude, telling reporters: "While we all feel that Johnson is being singled out as an object of punishment and feel a certain sympathy in this account, the general attitude of sporting men seems to be that it is for the best. He has been a bad influence on the sporting community, just as he has been in every community in which he has lived."

Sensing their greatest opportunity was just ahead, Palzer and O'Rourke reconciled—or at least put their differences on the back burner—and O'Rourke was the one Palzer turned to in the corner for a solution to the licking Tony Ross, 30 pounds lighter, was giving him on November 18 in Philadelphia. The papers gave Ross all six rounds.

No matter. Within 10 days, Los Angeles promoter Tom McCarey announced he was matching Palzer and Nebraska cowpuncher Luther McCarty on New Year's Day, 1913, for the heavyweight title. The white title, that is.

While McCarty had more experience and skills than Palzer, most people noted the latter's advantage in size, weight, and reach, and gave McCarty little chance against him.

The busiest man on fight day was O'Rourke. "Palzer's eyes were kept almost continuously on his manager, who shouted instructions to him through a megaphone," reported one paper. "He appeared to have no initiative whatsoever. O'Rourke's instructions were as audible to McCarty as to Palzer, and every move of the Iowan was anticipated by his foe."

When it wasn't Palzer beseeching him, it was McCarty, who battered his lumbering foe so steadily that he felt constrained several times to yell at O'Rourke, "Do you want me to kill him?"

Knocked out in the 18th round, Palzer of course blamed O'Rourke's instructions, and said it was "back to the barnyard now."

But exactly one month later, Palzer was on a boat for Europe with a telegram in his pocket from Johnson, confirming their fight for the real heavyweight title on June 25 in Paris.

Luckily for Palzer, it never happened. He came down with malaria on the boat, and a couple of weeks later, the match was called off after somebody connected with the promotion remembered how Palzer had looked against McCarty.

That April, newspapers reported that Palzer, a veteran of just 11 professional fights, might be through in the ring because "battering in the ring and violent exercise has so misplaced his internal organs that he would have to undergo an operation." At least he was breathing, which was more than could be said a month later for the official white heavyweight champion. On May 24, McCarty—who'd once said that before he'd let Johnson beat him, "they would have to carry me out of the ring a dead man"—was carried out of the ring a dead man after Arthur Pelkey, a nondescript white heavyweight, knocked him out in the first round in Vancouver, British Columbia.

It took four men to carry Palzer back to his corner after Frank Moran leveled him in seven rounds in September 1913. "[Palzer] took enough punishment to stop two or three ordinary fighters," said the *New York Times*. They hauled him away unconscious again after Dan Daly knocked him out in two rounds in October. When Palzer lasted less than a round with Andre Anderson in December, even O'Rourke said it was time for him to make tracks for a new career.

"If he is allowed to fight on, a serious accident may befall him," said the manager. "There was a time when he looked to be the next heavyweight champion of the world. I never could understand it, but he seemed to hit the toboggan. Game, wonderfully built, and a terrific hitter, he had

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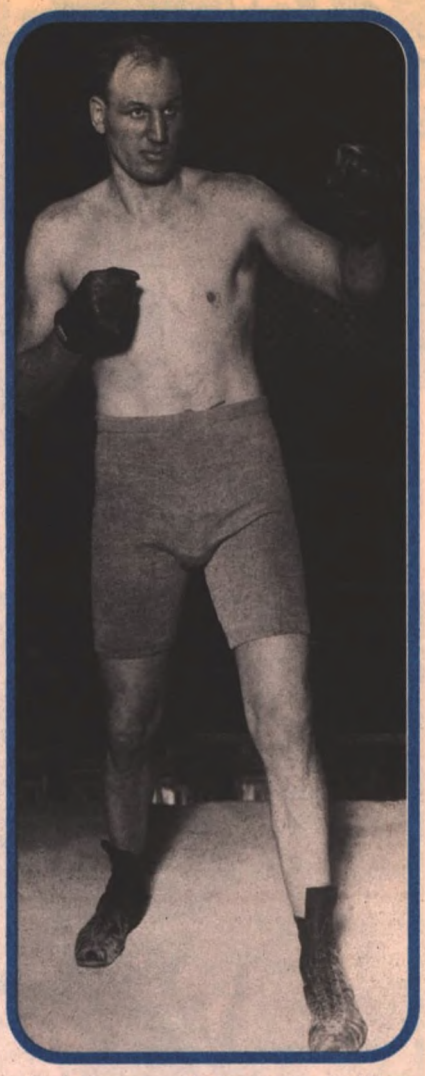
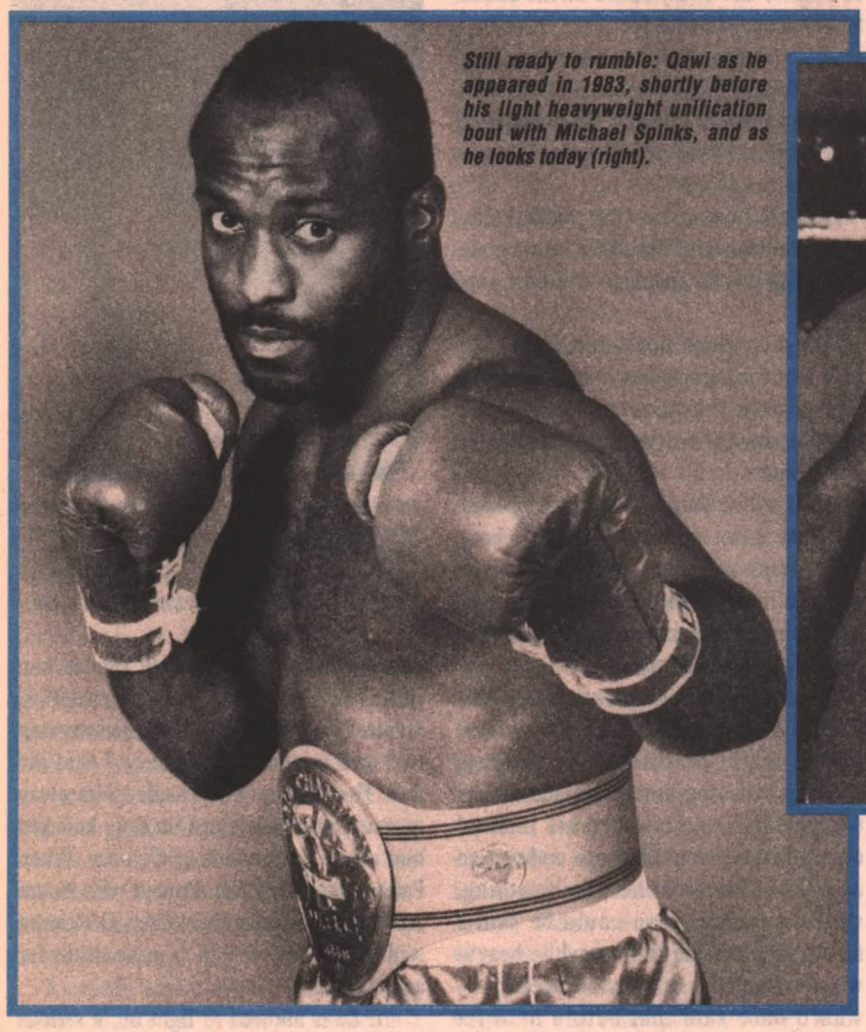


After taking a terrible beating the first three rounds, Palzer, virtually out on his feet, knocked out Fred Fulton (pictured) with a single left in the fourth. Despite the dramatic come-from-behind victory, Palzer never fought again.

DWIGHT MUHAMMAD QAWI

"I Was Never This Happy And Content When I Was Fighting"



Still ready to rumble: Qawi as he appeared in 1983, shortly before his light heavyweight unification bout with Michael Spinks, and as he looks today (right).

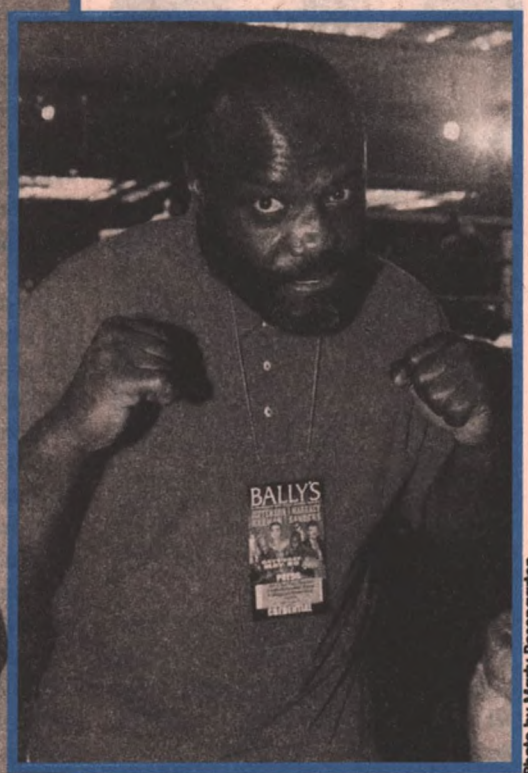


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

By Joe Santoliquito

It was one of those lingering things that fear kept pushing aside. Dwight Muhammad Qawi was known for burrowing his way into opponents and destroying them. That was his style, the way the two-division former champ took care of business in the ring. But Qawi was faltering when it came to a particularly daunting outside-of-the-ring task he needed to face. For once, the intimidator was intimidated. Still, Qawi knew that he'd eventually have to dig deeper into his soul and confront the very thing he had pushed aside for so long—the death of his brother Jeffrey. Even so, he hardly expected that a confrontation with his buried emotions would erupt spontaneously in front of a group of troubled teens ...

Community service, ordered by a judge for a driving violation, was not meant to elicit a cathartic response. Yet Qawi, a symbol of strength and fortitude, a granite-

Qawi tallied two brutal knockouts of Matthew Saad Muhammad to first win and then defend the WBC 175-pound title. Qawi is concerned that he contributed to the somewhat deteriorated condition Saad finds himself in today.

like figure of a man who had faced some of the greatest light heavyweight and cruiserweights in boxing history, stood in front of a group of teenagers, reduced to a sobbing mess. It was fate, Qawi says today, that altered his life and has given him a new direction.

For the last three years, Qawi, now 47, has been working with troubled teens as a drug and alcohol rehabilitation counselor at a facility called the Lighthouse, a privately owned business based in Mays Landing, New Jersey, about 20 miles west of Atlantic City. One day a week, he also does a radio show called *Boxing With The Champ*. Above everything else, Qawi seems pleased with his current station in life and credits the turnaround to his experience in front of a group of adolescents 10 years ago.

"I was never this happy and content when I was fighting," said Qawi, the former WBC light heavy and WBA cruiserweight champ. "How true it is that money and prestige can bring out the worst in people. Being champion and the pressure that brought about, I had to deal with it, but I was unprepared."

Unlike many former champions, "The Camden Buzzsaw" has prepared well for his life after boxing. He finished his career with a 41-11-1 (25) mark and is still very popular in the Atlantic City and Philadelphia areas, getting stopped frequently when out in public by fans who remember his two wars with Matthew Saad Muhammad, or his battle with Michael Spinks, or his two memorable clashes with Evander Holyfield. Qawi was a smaller version of Joe Frazier during his prime, someone who reveled in his intimidating image, the kind of guy whose powerfully built presence would make people cross the street rather than cross his path.

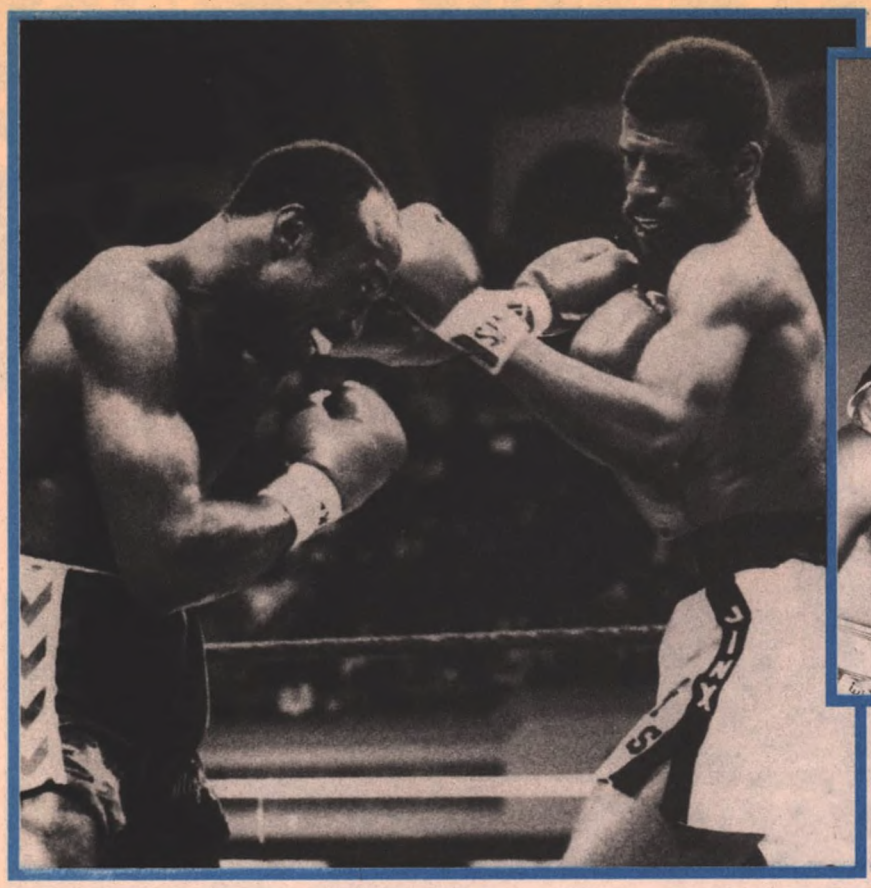
Qawi laughs at the thought today. In fact, to know Qawi personally is to know a conscientious, coherent, tranquil man. He is very approachable, as opposed to the brooding, forbidden facade he liked to project in the ring.

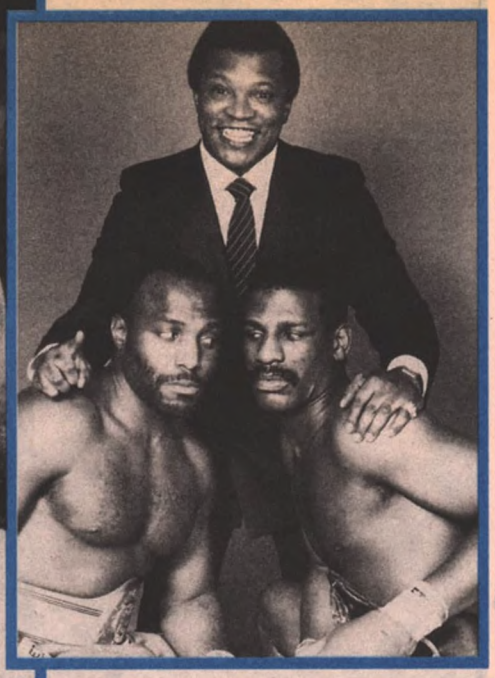
A major wall came tumbling down after an unfortunate incident with the law in 1988. Qawi was coming from Baltimore, on his way back to Camden, when he was pulled over for swerving recklessly. There was no major accident, but Qawi would have to pay the price by doing community service and talking to kids on the dangers of alcohol and drugs. That same year, Qawi's younger brother, Jeffrey, was found dead of a drug overdose, so Qawi was familiar with what chemical dependency could do.

Qawi, however, was void of any emotion. That stoic figure who had hammered down Saad Muhammad still occasionally surfaced outside the ring. So he procrastinated; talking to the kids would have to wait. But while training for a comeback in '90 at the Pleasantville Recreation Center, Qawi was forced to face the prospect of talking to the kids.

"I didn't want to do it," Qawi recalled. "I was intimidated by it, so I put it off for a while. But my probation officer told me I had to do this. I was afraid of myself and getting in touch with my emotions, the hurt and pain it would all cause. But these kids happened to be at the rec center, so I thought, *Why not go and get it over with?* When I was telling them about my brother's lifestyle and how he lived, all of sudden, I couldn't stop crying in front of these kids. I'm a champion crying like a baby.

"I don't think any of those kids looked down on me for what I did. Sure, they pretended to be hard, but my grieving showed





Qawi lost the WBC belt in his 1983 unification bout with Spinks (left), but soon bounced back to win the WBA cruiserweight title by knocking out local hero Piet Crous in South Africa. Before they fought officially, Qawi and Spinks (above with promoter Butch Lewis) had their share of violent gym wars.

a human side of me, and that's what these kids lacked. It's the reason why people do drugs and drink. The drugs numb them from society, the chemicals run them. The only way to deal with pain is to face it. I had to follow my own advice. I had to start accepting that my brother was gone. I had to start taking what he gave us, his sense of humor, the way he could make anyone laugh. I think I connected with a few of those kids that day, and that got me thinking about working with them after boxing. I'm so grateful for everything I have now. Oh, I reflect a lot on what I could have done differently. But the reason I'm happy now is because I learned a lesson; I learned to be patient."

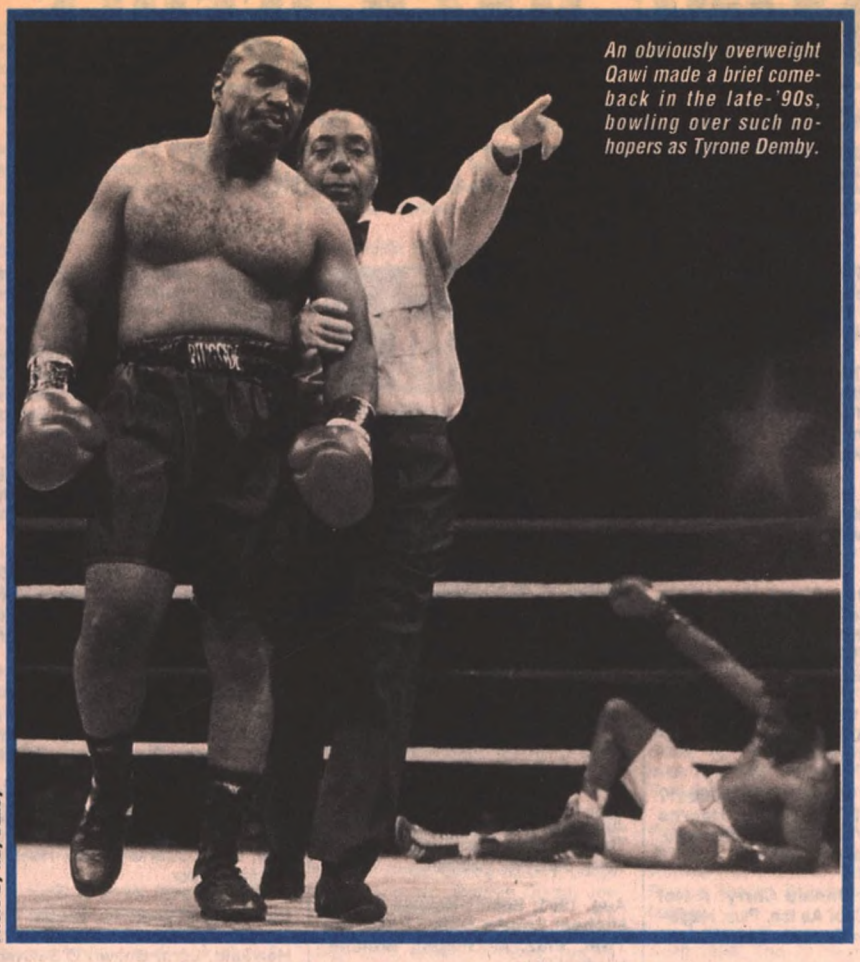
Qawi discovered, while working with the kids at Lighthouse, that his troubles were not so bad after all. Although he's been divorced twice, he still maintains a positive relationship with his former wives and a close relationship with his sons, one 16 and the other 14. Both sons live with their mothers in Camden County, New Jersey.

"I love both of my sons because they respect their mothers," Qawi said. "They don't talk about getting into boxing, but they both have me in them. I hardly talk about boxing or what I did around them. I want them to walk their own walk in life."

For the kids at Lighthouse, Qawi serves as a model for what is possible. He was incarcerated early in his life for armed robbery, and has a history of drug abuse. Like the kids he's now trying to help, the streets took hold of Qawi in his teens. He did not start boxing until he was in prison, and by the time he got out, he'd found his first calling.

The experience of living the street life enables Qawi to look the kids he works

Qawi poses with Evander Holyfield prior to their classic 1986 battle for the WBA cruiserweight belt. Although Qawi lost a close 15-round decision, he had the satisfaction of being involved in what is widely considered the greatest cruiserweight fight of all-time.



An obviously overweight Qawi made a brief comeback in the late-'90s, bowling over such no-hopers as Tyrone Demby.

Photo by Ray Bailey

with straight in the eye and know what they've been through. His muscled stature and fierce reputation certainly helps when it's time to get a point across.

"The message I keep telling these kids is that they are the best thing they have going," Qawi said. "I try to stress to them that they can't control outside factors, so it makes no sense to get frustrated and become abusive to themselves or strike out at others. The only thing that you control is you. I think I learned that lesson two or three years ago myself. Most of the problems these kids have are with acceptance. They have a tendency to blame everyone but themselves.

"This has been a heck of a challenge, working with these kids. They are where I came from, so I could relate to them. All their acting out is sending messages. I understand them. You have to see what's behind their problems."

Qawi can be confrontational when he has to be, but he prefers a sensitive approach, infused with mutual respect. There is, however, a careful balance Qawi walks. The teens know better than to physically challenge the former fighter, but he does not want them to be afraid of him, nor feel as if they can't talk to him about anything.

The rewards of the job are subtle. They come in small doses of trust, and eventually Qawi began to hear a few kids repeat some of the sayings and lessons he tried to convey to them.

"Kids have come back to the facility and thanked me for helping them deal with their anger," Qawi said. "Believe me, there's nothing like it. Anger eats at you, so you have to learn to let it go. Not for other people, but for yourself."

"Dwight is certainly a role model to a lot of our kids," said Dr. James Congdon, clinical director of Lighthouse. "We have a multi-ethnic population here, and it's good to have good role models of all races. I know Dwight feels strongly about our adolescents and teaching them lessons about their own lives in a language they understand. Dwight is a really kind, understanding guy. Anyone who works in this field, you have to invest a piece of yourself, and Dwight has done that."

At a recent HBO *Boxing After Dark* show featuring Oleg Maskaev and Derrick Jefferson at Bally's Park Place in Atlantic City, Qawi happened to be in the same company as Spinks, the man who beat him for the undisputed light heavyweight title via 15-round decision on March 18, 1983. A big smile crossed Spinks' face at the mention of his old rival. The two first met in Philadelphia in the late-'70s. Spinks had won an Olympic gold medal and just embarked on his pro career.

Spinks would always arrive at Joe Frazier's Gym looking for someone to spar with, and frequently wound up working with heavyweights who wanted to improve their speed. Spinks was not getting anything out of it, except pounded on by bigger men. He was eventually told there was someone else working out at Frazier's who was around the same size as him. He was short, stubborn, and extremely tough—it was Qawi, then known as Dwight Braxton.

"They were wars," Spinks recalled. "Braxton was very, very tough. You could tell then that he had a lot of spirit. He was used to beating guys up, and he was determined to get the best of me, which he never did. But Braxton would always throw these sneaky punches. When he used to corner me, I'd jump on him, and we'd both fall on the canvas. I'll tell you this,

(Continued on page 77)

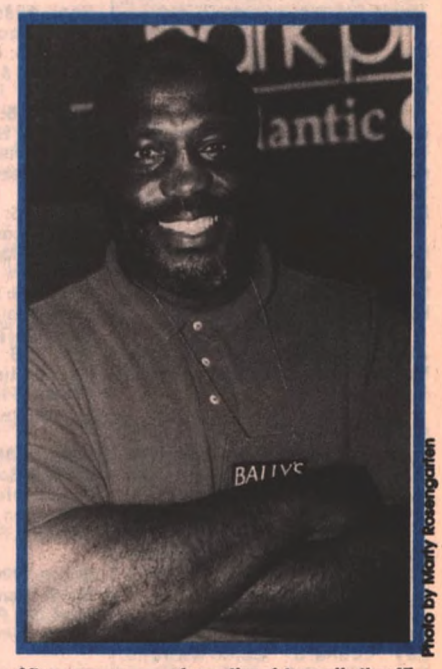


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

After many years of emotional turmoil, the 47-year-old Qawi is a happy man today, working with troubled teens and doing a weekly boxing show on an Atlantic City radio station.

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NEW FACES

ROSS THOMPSON

Junior Middleweight

By Joe Santoliquito

Photo by Chuck Metzger

Everywhere Ross Thompson goes, every time he steps into the ring, he moves in fours. Always surrounding him, the junior middleweight believes, are his father, Woodrow, and his brothers, Curtis and Ray. Thompson knows they would be proud of him if they could see him today on the verge of the biggest fight of his life as the mandatory challenger to IBF junior middle champ Fernando Vargas.

So Thompson carries his silent, private cheering section with him wherever he goes. They buttress his doubts, they motivate him, they're there to talk to when no one else is around. Tragedy befell the three men, and it's Thompson's responsibility to carry on their memory.

Curtis Thompson was stabbed to death in December 1987 in Dayton, Ohio; Ray was an aspiring 19-year-old pro himself with a 6-0 mark when he drowned in June '88; and Woodrow died of a sudden heart attack in May '97. Do you think Thompson, 24-3-1 (16), finds the prospect of facing a killer in the ring like Vargas difficult?

"I can't see myself losing. In fact, I'm guaranteeing a victory," Thompson said. "I have a real, real close family, and we've been through, *I've* been through, a lot of things, so facing Vargas is not that big. Besides, I feel I'm fighting for more than just me. My brothers and my father are watching. I know it. Every time I step in that ring, they're there with me. I know that it was always my father's dream for me to be a world champion. Growing up, my father was my biggest critic; he always wanted me to look better and fight better guys.

(Continued on page 77)

PRO RECORD

1992		
Dec. 27	Armando Avila, Las Vegas, NV	KO 1
1993		
Jan. 21	Steve Von Schert, Irvine, CA	W 4
Feb. 14	Jim Hillhouse, Las Vegas	W 6
March 1	Benjamin Barrientos, Inglewood, CA	KO 1
April 29	Mariano Soloria, Irvine	KO 2
May 27	Delbert McNeil, Irvine	KO 1
June 8	Rodney Jones, Las Vegas	W 4
Aug. 13	Antonio Cruz, Guadalajara, Mexico	KO 2
Sept. 24	Lamont Johnson, Phoenix, AZ	KO 2
Dec. 23	Martin Quiroz, Lakeside, CA	KO 4
1994		
Feb. 2	Bobby Butters, Las Vegas	KO 3
Aug. 15	Florencio Ibarra, Inglewood	D 8
Sept. 15	Humberto Aranda, Las Vegas	KO 3
Dec. 3	Eric Alexander, Las Vegas	W 6
1995		
Feb. 17	Adrian Stone, Atlantic City	L Disq. 7
July 20	Robert Illgen, Las Vegas	KO 1
Aug. 3	Daniel Perez, Las Vegas	KO 6
Sept. 30	Francisco Mendez, Las Vegas	KO 4
Dec. 31	Wileerforce Kigunda, Miami Beach, FL	KO 4
1996		
Feb. 25	James Page, Las Vegas	L 10
April 27	Damone Wright, Las Vegas	KO 1
Aug. 30	Marco Ludwig, Las Vegas	W 10
1997		
April 5	Joe DeJesus, Miami	KO 3
June 24	Oba Carr, Baton Rouge, LA	L 10
Oct. 22	Leroy Owens, Las Vegas	W 6
1998		
June 9	Thomas Cameron, Biloxi, MS	W 8
1999		
April 24	Antonio Reese, Washington, D.C.	KO 5
Dec. 18	Derrick Graham, Tunica, MS	W 12

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
28	24	3	1	16

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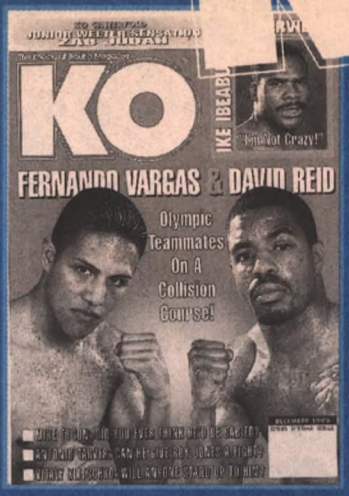

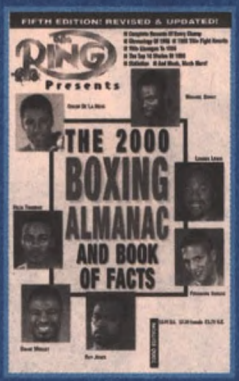

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CAMERA CLICKS

Photo by Scott Romer

Some of the biggest stars ever to dazzle the crowds at Indianapolis' Conseco Fieldhouse gathered together for this photo ... and they let Murad Muhammad and Richard Hall pose with them as well. Pictured (from left) are Pacers point guard Mark Jackson, undisputed light heavyweight champ Roy Jones, Muhammad, Hall, and Pacers shooting guard Reggie Miller.

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

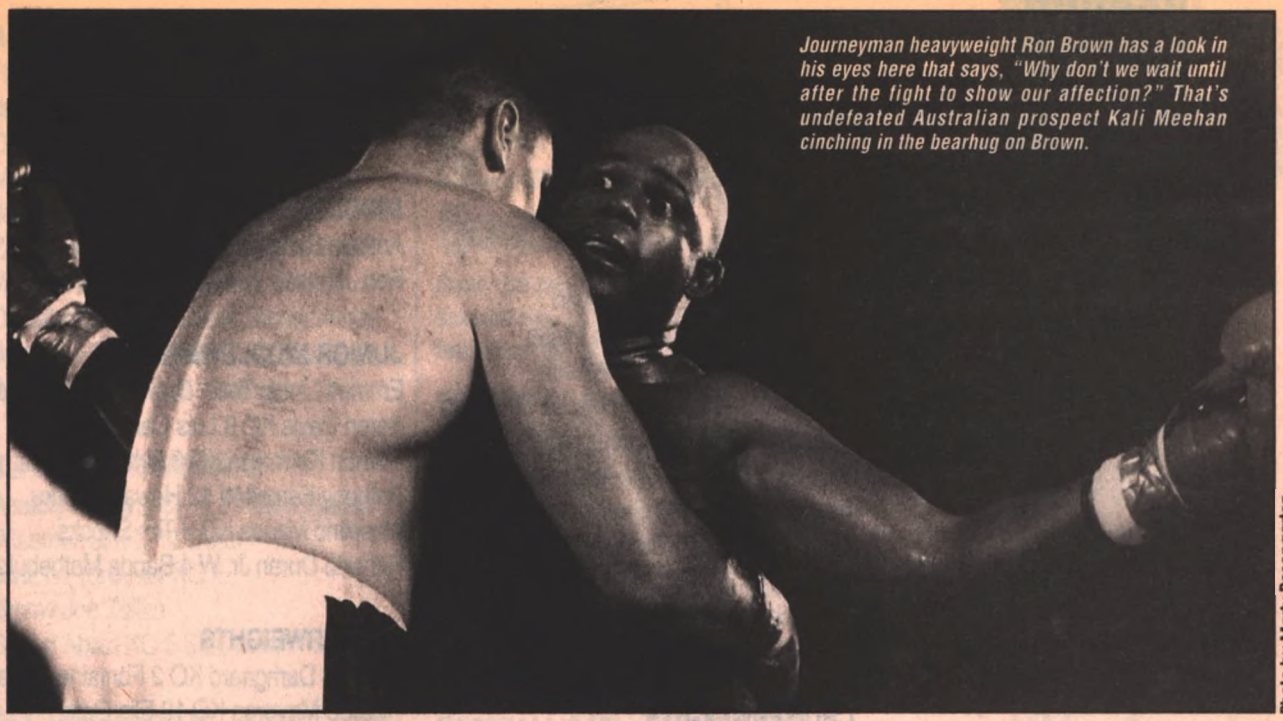
In the last issue of THE RING, we found room for a picture of photographer Marty Rosengarten, and now, in an effort to extend the record for most consecutive issues featuring a Rosengarten, we present to you Marty's son, Keith, comparing fists with Hall of Famer Michael Spinks.

Photo by Pat Orr

International Boxing Hall of Fame Director Ed Brophy shows off his new bathrobe as he prepares for bed. Do you think new inductee Ken Buchanan would have donated this authentic ring robe if he knew he was merely contributing to Brophy's personal collection?

Photo by Tom Casino/Showtime

Instead of going to Disney World after a big win, Johnny Tapia prefers congregating at the local head-rubbing convention. Must be an Albuquerque thing.



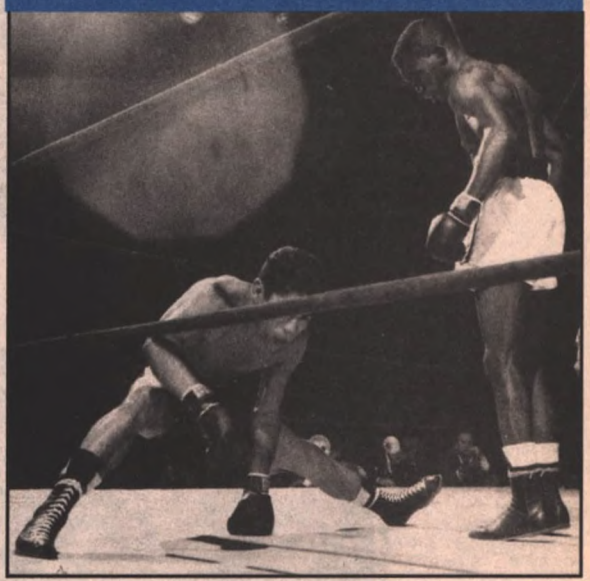
Journeyman heavyweight Ron Brown has a look in his eyes here that says, "Why don't we wait until after the fight to show our affection?" That's undefeated Australian prospect Kali Meehan cinching in the bearhug on Brown.

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Photo by Scott Romer

Angel Manfredy, perhaps the best active fighter still looking for his first world title, gets a little advice from a man who was able to do what Manfredy has thus far fallen short of, three-division former champ Jeff Fenech. Fenech may have the better ring dossier, but we'll give Manfredy props for the better leather hat.

NOSTALGIA CORNER



Who says you can't do calisthenics in the middle of the fight? In the fifth round of his challenge of then-lightweight champ Ike Williams in 1948, Jesse Flores called timeout to stretch his hamstrings, and the champ obliged. Actually, this was one of the four knockdowns Williams scored en route to a 10th-round kayo.

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

"Now I've got you where I want you!" Limping around on a broken ankle, Derrick Jefferson had a tough time tracking down Oleg Maskaev, but after the fight, he was able to get the Russian into perfect range. Maskaev doesn't even see the punch coming.

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS
David Tua KO 1 Obed Sullivan
David Izon KO 2 Reynaldo Minus
Larry Donald KO 5 Phil Jackson
Henry Akinwande KO 5 Russell Chasteen
Oliver McCall KO 3 Marcus McIntyre
Jorge Luis Gonzalez W 8 Bradley Rone
Trevor Berbick W 12 Shane Sutcliffe
Wade Lewis KO 1 Thomas Evans
Nate Jones W 10 Anthony Willis
Faruq Saleem KO 2 Jeff Lally
Luan Krasniqi KO 4 Rodney McSwain

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Dale Brown KO 2 Matthew Charleston
Torsten May KO 3 Valery Semishkur

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Lincoln Carter W 10 Kenny Snow
Neil Simpson W 12 Mark Baker

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Sven Ottke W 12 Tocker Pudwill
(Retains IBF Title)
Thomas Tate KO 5 Anthony Andrews
Omar Sheika W 10 Glen Johnson
Jaffa Ballogou KO 4 Levan Easley
Ryan Rhodes W 6 Ojay Abrahams

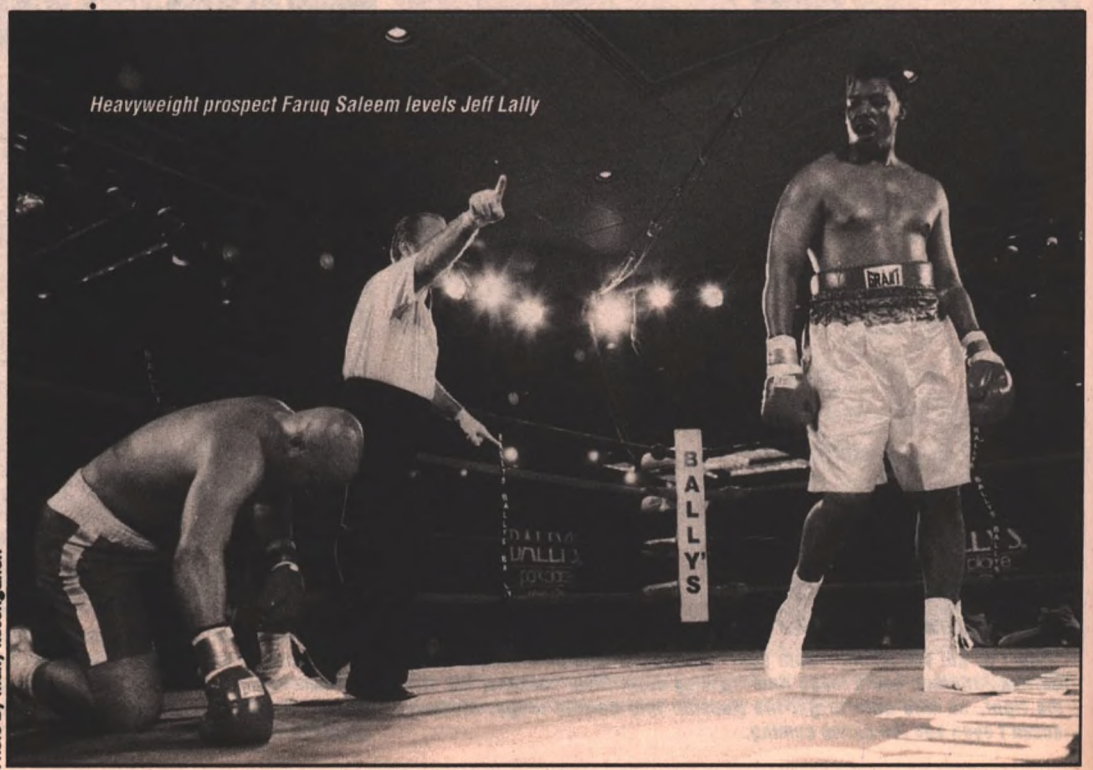
MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Antonio Perugino W 12 William Gare
Ron Johnson W 4 Cleveland Corder

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Emmett Linton Tech. Draw 3 Lloyd Joseph
Aaron Davis KO 8 Luis Carmona
Roman Karmazin KO 3 Orhan Delibas
Anthony Farnell W 12 Howard Clarke
Maselino Masoe KO 3 Tim Shocks
Roberto Duran Jr. W 4 Banda Mathebulo

WELTERWEIGHTS
Thomas Damgaard KO 2 Fontaine Cabell
Ricardo Mayorga KO 10 Elio Ortiz
Horatio Garcia W 12 Carlos Rubio

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
Claudio Martinet W 8 James Crayton
Ener Julio W 12 Jose Zuniga
Demetrius Hopkins KO 2 William Butler

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Ben Tackie KO 10 Roberto Garcia
Billy Irwin KO 6 Miguel Arrozal



Heavyweight prospect Faruq Saleem levels Jeff Lally

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Alejandro Gonzalez KO 11
Harold Warren
Jose Juarez W 12 Saul Duran
Dennis Holbaek Pederson KO 7
Marty Jakubowski
Joel Perez KO 3 Antonio Garcia
Zoltan Kalocsai KO 3 Anatolij Vinevski
Wayne Rigby KO 8 Dariusz Snarski
Daniel Attah W 8 Russell Stoner Jones
Jermaine Fields W 6 Ruben Nevarez
Julio Diaz KO 5 Luis Lizarraga

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Anatoly Alexandrov W 8 Pedro Garcia
Wiseman Jim D 12 Dean Pithie
Tontcho Tontchev KO 2
Jimmy Joe Zeilke
Spend Abazi KO 5 Said Lawal

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Fred Norwood W 12 Julio Pablo Chacon
(Retains WBA Title)
Angel Vazquez KO 2 Jose Pantaleon
Cassius Baloyi KO 1 Hector Lizarraga
Baldito Ramirez W 10 Rudy Martinez
Victor Polo W 8 Marcos Badillo

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Antonio Cermeno KO 2 Carlos Rocha
Jesus Salud KO 3 Boyke Sillehu
Simon Ramoni KO 8 Patrick Mullings
Arnel Barotillo KO 1 Sienghinya Sityassi

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Gerry Penalosa KO 6
Pone Saengmorakot
Eric Morel W 12 Alberto Ontiveros
Jesper Jensen D 12 Xolani Ndleleni
Gabriel Munoz W 8 Miguel Granados

FLYWEIGHTS

Peter Culshaw W 12 Baby Jake Matlala
Anis Roga KO 8 Dunoy Pena

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Hawk Makepula W 12 Marcus Obregon

STRAWWEIGHTS

Zolani Petelo KO 8 Mickey Cantwell
(Retains IBF Title)
Andy Tabanas KO 5 Agus Ray

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RINGSIDE REPORTS

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

Corrie Sanders required less than two rounds to blast out Bobby Czyz. It took him all of 63 seconds to do the same to Al "Ice" Cole. And early in the third round of his fight with Rahman, it seemed "The Rock" was going to become yet another quickie-kayo victim of the heavy-handed South African. But Rahman is no blown-up cruiserweight like Czyz and Cole—he's a heavyweight with a hefty heart—so with the door to his boxing future quickly closing, he refused to let Sanders slam it shut.

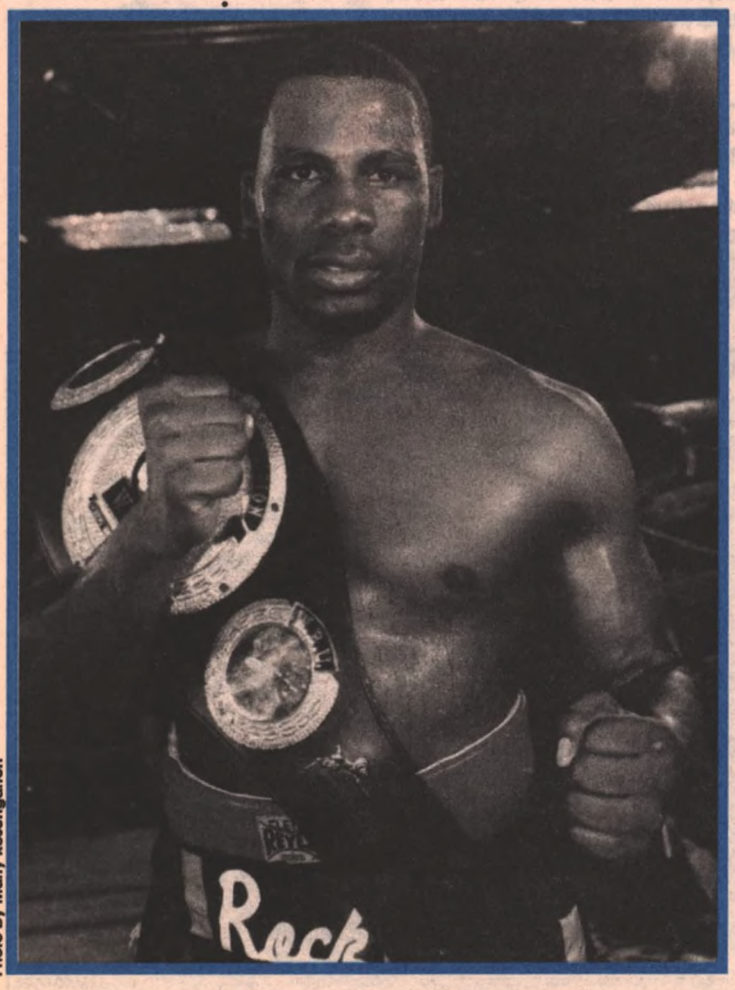


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Rahman, attempting to bounce back from knockout losses in his last two major fights, vowed that if he was defeated by Sanders, he would call it a career. But after losing the first two rounds and being decked early in the third, the banger from Baltimore changed everything by scoring a knockdown of his own with a right hand as Sanders tried to press his advantage. Rahman sent Sanders to the canvas again in the fourth, and ultimately stopped his weary opponent with a vicious barrage in the seventh. Rahman, despite the early difficulty, remains a professional prize fighter, and once again must be considered a top-10 heavyweight.

• • • •

Hasim Rahman

Bernard Hopkins W 12 Syd Vanderpool

Indianapolis, Indiana: Hopkins' unanimous decision over Vanderpool was far from the overwhelming performance he needed to propel him into a bout with Roy Jones, but it was good enough to register his 11th defense of the IBF middleweight title. That means that "The Executioner" has moved within striking distance of Carlos Monzon's division-record of 14 defenses, a tally that has stood since 1977, when Monzon retired still champ.

Vanderpool, Kitchener, Ontario, took the bout on short notice when Hopkins' original opponent, Brian Barbosa, was cut in a tuneup fight. Vanderpool, a sturdy southpaw who hadn't lost in seven years, was the aggressor the first two rounds and managed to land a few shots, but failed to inflict any serious damage.

Hopkins, 35, was strangely passive for somebody hoping to impress, but he began to open up a bit in the third, banging home several bodyshots. The third round also marked the first of several ungainly pratfalls, and when they tumbled to the canvas again in the sixth, Hopkins even managed to get in a few cuffing blows as they fell. The 13,211 fans at the Conseco Fieldhouse, most of whom came to watch Jones pummel Richard Hall in the main event, weren't amused, and boos began in the fourth and continued sporadically throughout the rest of the fight.

There was another ugly incident in the seventh when Hopkins hit Vanderpool low, and they fell to the floor again. Conversely, the eighth was a bristling session in which both scored well, especially the defending champion, who drilled his 27-year-old foe with a head-snapping right.

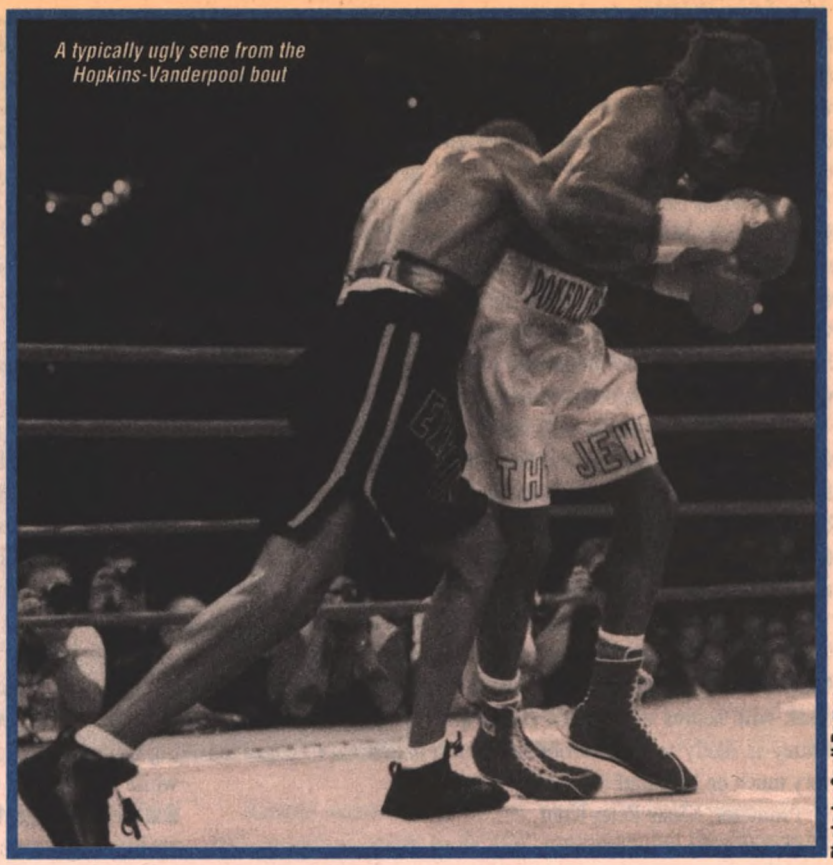
Hopkins, 37-2-1 (27) with 1 no-contest, continued to tag Vanderpool, 28-2 (18), with lead rights from the outside, and by the time the fight entered the championship rounds, the challenger was more interested in survival than in winning.

In the waning seconds of the fight, Hopkins almost got the kayo he needed to put a more positive spin on his showing. He pinned the weary Vanderpool on the ropes and was bombarding him with combinations when referee Bill Paige (USA) jumped between them. What originally looked like a TKO for Hopkins turned out to be a blunder by Paige, who said he thought he heard the bell. By time the ref figured out what was going on, the fight was officially over.

All three judges voted for Hopkins. Harry Davis (Canada) had it the closest at 116-112, while George Hill (USA) and Fred Jones (USA) scored the bout 118-109 and 118-110, respectively.

"I'm from Philadelphia; I've seen people boo Santa Claus," said Hopkins in response to the crowd's reaction. Barbosa is probably next.

Television: HBO
Promoter: M&M Sports
(5-13-00)



A typically ugly sene from the Hopkins-Vanderpool bout

Photo by Scott Romer

Glenn Catley KO 12 Markus Beyer

Frankfurt, Germany: Believing he was behind on the judges' scorecards heading into the final round, Catley, 166¾, England, staged a thrillingly decisive assault to stop Beyer, 167, Germany, to claim the WBC super middleweight title at the Sporthall. It was the German's second defense of the title he won from another Briton, Richie Woodhall, last year.

Beaten on a controversial decision by Woodhall for the same title over 18 months before, Catley was determined to make the most of this second chance. Last December he won an eliminator against Canadian Eric Lucas in Montreal, also stopping him in the final round. The disappointment he felt so palpably in the moments after his defeat to Woodhall provided the vital spur in both bouts.

Mere seconds into the 12th, Beyer was sent down for a count of eight by a sharp left uppercut followed by a right through the middle. He regained his feet, but was clearly shaky and in no shape to defend himself as Catley followed up relentlessly. Belgian referee Bob Logist intervened at 53 seconds of the round as Beyer sagged again, prompting unbridled jubilation in the Catley camp.

"I've been waiting 15 years for this win. I can't put into words just how I feel at this moment," said Catley, 26-3 (20). "Chris Saniger, my manager and trainer, told me going into the last round that I needed a knockout to win and everything slotted into place. It was a left uppercut and right through the middle which did the damage, and as soon as I unloaded the two punches I knew Beyer was in serious trouble."

As he had promised, 28-year-old Catley made a positive start to the fight and refused to allow Beyer, 29, to settle in the opening

round. Showing such early aggression enabled Catley to knock southpaw Beyer, 18-1 (8), out of his stride. It also helped him to withstand Beyer's best punch of the fight—a clean counter left—in the second. Catley admitted afterward that it shook him to his boots.

Even when Beyer attempted to assert his authority with some short, snappy blows, the Englishman was able to weather the storm. Both men slackened in the fourth and fifth rounds as Beyer edged slightly ahead. But neither fighter really took charge, Catley surviving his only other anxious moment in the ninth round when he was warned for the illegal use of his head. He came back to take the 10th round before producing fireworks in the last.

"I know some people will say it was a lucky punch," said Catley, "but I went out for the final three minutes with all intents and purposes to score a knockout. Fortunately, it came off in such devastating fashion at just the right time. Beyer was obviously in trouble after taking the count, and I immediately knew he had nothing to offer as I stepped in again to finish him off."

Through 11 rounds, judge Juan Jose Guerra (Mexico) had Catley up by a perplexing 107-102 margin, while Frank Cappuccino (USA) and Franco Ciminale (Italy) were closer to the mark with scores of 106-104 Beyer and 105-105, respectively. Catley is likely to meet Woodhall in a rematch with vengeance very much on his mind.

Promoter: Klaus-Peter Kohl

(5-6-00)

Brian Doogan

Paul Spadafora Tech. Win 10 Mike Griffith

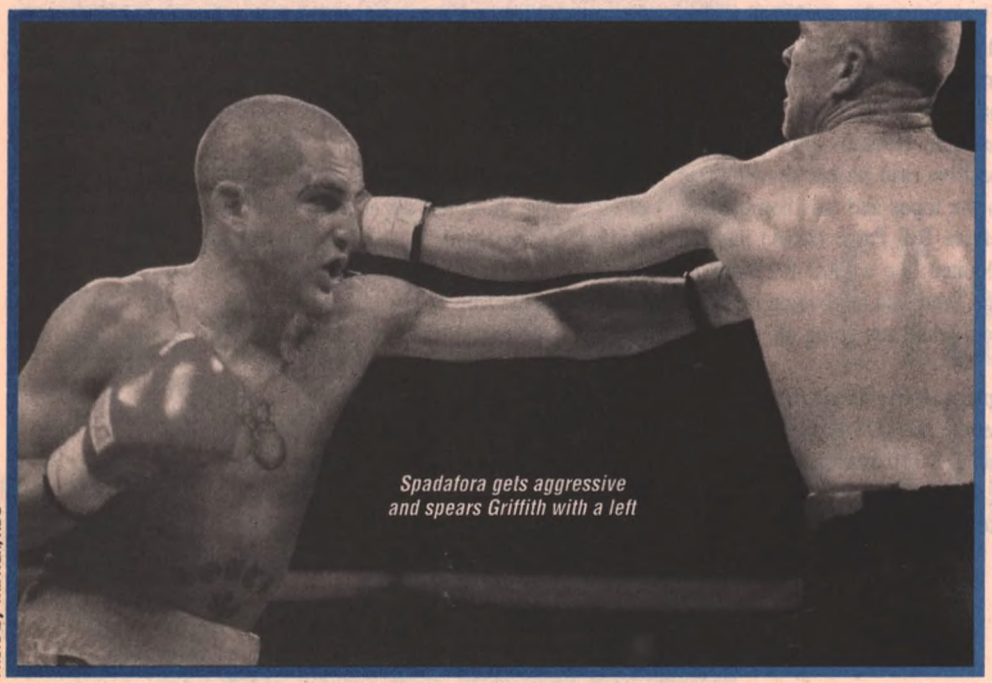
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: The proverbial bloom is off the rose for Spadafora. Despite being selected to headline the opener of the HBO *KO Nation* series, Spadafora's successful defense of the IBF lightweight title against Griffith was not viewed as satisfactory by the ringsiders. From an objective standpoint, the promotion was a success. A near-sellout crowd of some 7,200 jammed the Mellon Arena, and the mix was noticeably tilted toward the young. The hip-hop format included dancing girls and a DJ, with a "host" replacing the traditional ring announcer. They even had Drew Carey spearheading a small contingent of Cleveland fans to back the challenger. All this went well enough.

But Spadafora, 135, Pittsburgh, failed to sparkle while dutifully picking up a technical decision over Griffith, 134½, Lorain, Ohio, after 10 of the scheduled 12. Critical press blamed the disappointment on too much activity, unmindful that Henry Armstrong once made four title defenses in one month!

"He should have laid off," reasoned promoter Mike Acri. "But you can't pass up HBO." One writer even carped that the discretionary tactician didn't belong on a show where the operative word is "KO." In truth, while Spadafora was a bit lackluster, he suffered as much from the public's subconscious tendency to award close rounds to an underdog from whom little is expected, as from the effects of the determined Griffith, a tough clubfighter with no major wins.

The first four rounds were a tossup. Spadafora, 24, was a bit more animated, picking up points with opportune southpaw counters. Griffith, 27, was purposeful, conserving his punches and trying to make a little do a lot. The action was tactically interesting while not electric. Clashes of heads cut the champion in the third and the challenger in the fourth.

In an ugly fifth, Spadafora was cautioned by ref Ernie Sharif (USA) for trying to spin Griffith. This is a trademark tactic that "The Pittsburgh Kid" uses to gain angles, but it was effectively thwarted by the challenger. In subsequent rounds, Griffith tried to make it a streetfight, but Spadafora kept the lid on that while finally gaining enough control to pull out of the stalemate. The favorite appeared safely on his way to a decision win when a vicious clash of heads occurred in the 10th. The challenger suffered a badly cut right eye, and the bout was terminated after the round. Going to the scorecards, Joe Pasquale (USA) had it 95-95, while both Fred Jones (USA) and Dana DePaolo (USA) had Spadafora up 98-92. THE RING agreed with the verdict, 99-92.



Spadafora gets aggressive and spears Griffith with a left

Photo by Will Hart/HBO

The loser didn't. "How could [the score] be that far unless I got knocked down four times?" Griffith, 23-7 (9), protested. "I should be walking home with the belt around my belly right now."

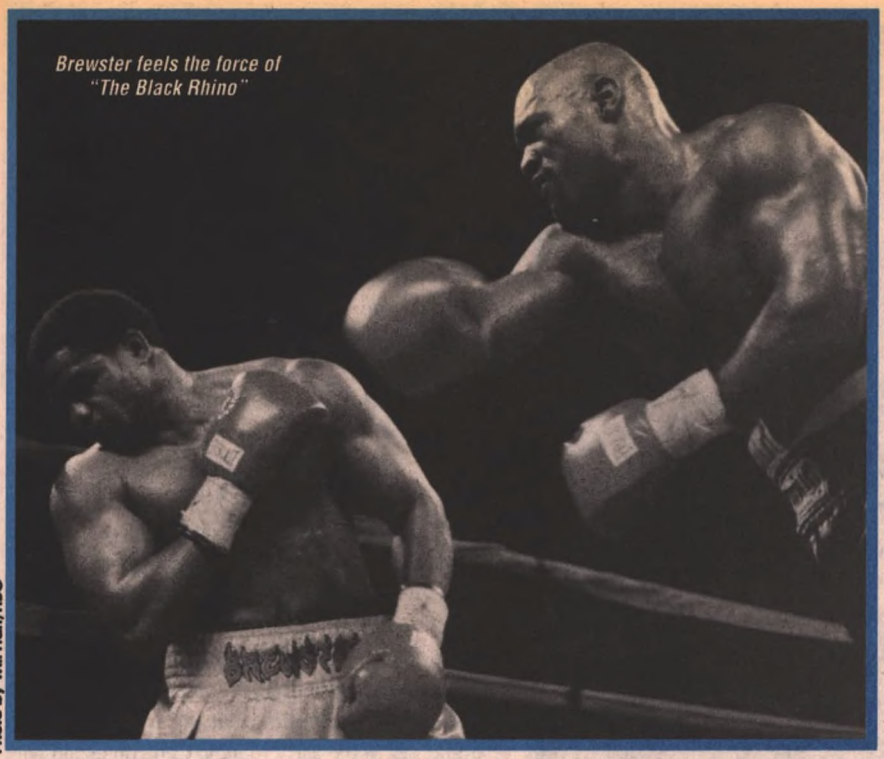
"He seemed stale," Acri said of Spadafora. "He was fighting like he was burned out."

"It was what I didn't do that bothered me," Spadafora, 30-0 (14), confessed. "I was just a shell of myself."

Anyone for a rematch?

(5-6-00)

J.R. Jowett



Brewster feels the force of "The Black Rhino"

Photo by Will Hart/HBO

Clifford Etienne W 10 Lamon Brewster

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Of all fighters, heavyweights are most often ragged for dogging it. But that's the last thing that could be said of Brewster and Etienne, who opened the HBO *KO Nation* series with a grueling 10 under Spadafora-Griffith.

The ballyhooed Brewster, 226, Los Angeles, California, exploded out for the first and briefly had Etienne, 219½, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, looking like he was on the wrong end of a mismatch. But Brewster admitted afterward that upon taking one look at the fearsome "Black Rhino," he decided to abandon tactical maneuvering and try to get it over with quickly. The premonition proved fateful.

A minute into the first, The Rhino had collected himself and began to bore inside—not to maul, but to relentlessly punish Brewster with piston punches. By the end of the exhilarating first, the favorite had a badly cut right eye and was being rocked.

By forcing Brewster inexorably back, Etienne robbed him of his power and controlled the withering contest. Brewster was getting flogged on the ropes in the sixth, but managed a game, life-saving rally, despite a gesture of disdain from Etienne.

The only possible criticism of the contest might have been for its repetitiveness, but that was broken in the ninth. Though Brewster had absorbed the beating, it was Etienne who tired. Given a little room, the indomitable Brewster opened up and battered Etienne in a dramatic come-from-behind rally. But The Rhino weathered it and was back at close quarters in the 10th.

Bob Bell (USA) scored it 98-92, while George Kachulis (USA) and Ron Greenley (USA) both had it 99-91, to give Brewster his first loss after 23 wins, 20 by knockout. Etienne moved to 16-0 (11). Rick Steigerwald (USA) refereed.

Promoter: Michael Acri Promotions

(5-6-00)

J.R. Jowett

Juan Carlos Gomez KO 3 Imamu Mayfield

Neuss, Germany: With awesome ease, Gomez, 189¾, Germany via Cuba, destroyed former IBF cruiserweight titleholder Mayfield, 189¾, Freehold, New Jersey, to retain the WBC cruiserweight title for the eighth time (a new division record) and underline his position as the best cruiser in the world. Over 1,000 fans looked on at the Swissotel.

Promoter Klaus-Peter Kohl promised big fights to come for the 26-year-old Cuban if he could subdue Mayfield, who was competing in his fourth world title fight. Unification is possible against French WBA champion Fabrice Tiozzo, and a mandatory challenge by former middleweight and super middleweight champion James Toney would attract outside interest. Even a step up to heavyweight is plausible. All Gomez, 31-0 (26), had to do was dispatch Mayfield, 19-3-1 (15), and he comfortably succeeded.

Ranked number seven by the WBC, Mayfield conceded only half an inch in height to the 6'4" champion, but the 27-year-old soon discovered how physically imposing Gomez, who has reigned since 1998 wheh he dethroned Argentine Marcelo Dominguez, can be. The big Cuban demolished previous challenger Joseph Siluvangi in two rounds in March and was little more merciful to Mayfield.

Only seconds into the third round, he caught the American with a right to the body and a left to the jaw, sending him down. Mayfield rose to his feet, but remained visibly unsteady, and the fight was promptly waved off at the 50-second mark by referee Guadalupe Garcia (Mexico).

"I'm sure I can defeat all other cruiserweight champions and move up to the heavyweights successfully," said Gomez. "I've seen several fights of James Toney. That would be a very interesting match as well. He is an excellent, very experienced fighter. He fought many world class opponents including Roy Jones. But the most interesting fight for me would be against Tiozzo. I want to accomplish something great like a unification."

Promoter: Klaus-Peter Kohl

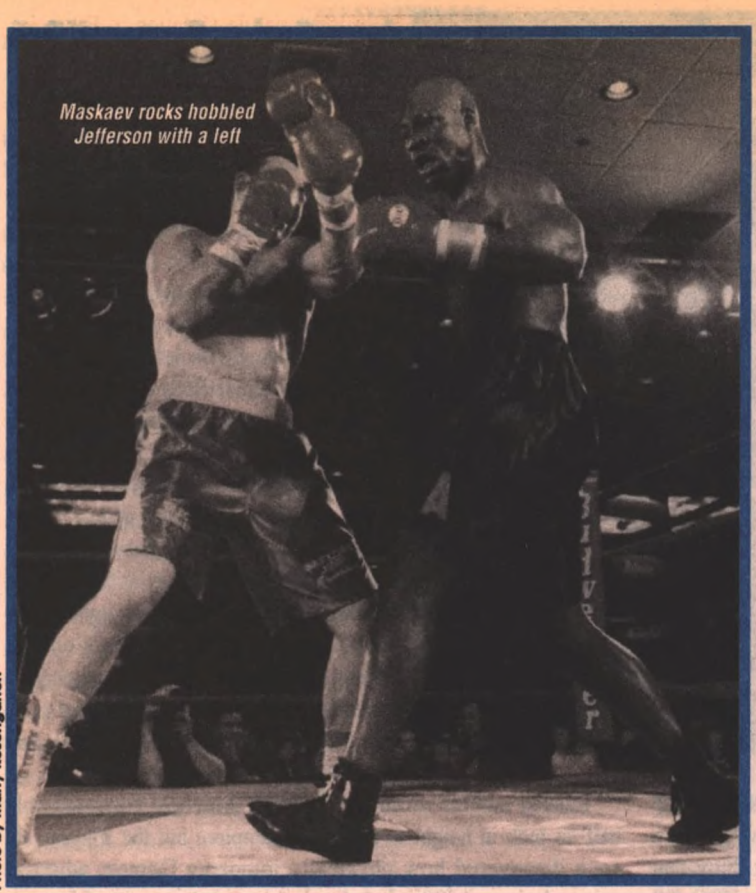
(5-6-00)

Brian Doogan

Oleg Maskaev KO 4 Derrick Jefferson

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Jefferson scored points for bravery and a high pain threshold, but the 32-year-old Detroit, Michigan, heavyweight lost his war against the 31-year-old Maskaev, when referee Michael Ortega (USA) rightfully stopped the bout at 2:10 of the fourth, giving Maskaev, 20-2 (15), the victory at Bally's Park Place.

Jefferson's troubles started midway through the first round when a short right from Maskaev, 230, caught him and dropped him in a heap. As Jefferson, 22-2-1 (18), fell to the canvas, his left



Maskaev rocks hobbled Jefferson with a left

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

foot folded underneath his body, resulting in what was later determined to be a broken ankle.

"I didn't know what it was when Jefferson got back up," Ortega said. "I just saw him start to limp, so the doctor told me to keep an eye out on the leg after the first round. As far as I saw, Jefferson still looked strong. I just had to keep an eye out on his ankle. In a case like that, the fighter said he could go on, and you have to give him the benefit of the doubt."

From that point on, however, Jefferson, 235, hobbled around the ring at a severe disadvantage. Maskaev, Staten Island, New York, by way of Russia, scored another knockdown in the second, which came more as a result of Jefferson's instability than of Maskaev's big right to the chin. Jefferson, meanwhile, could get little behind his punches, but he was not about to surrender easily, lunging in with bursts of wild shots until the end. Still, Ortega did the right thing in the fourth, when Jefferson tasted two booming rights and limped away in obvious pain, necessitating the stoppage.

"Derrick has a strong heart, and I think that showed," said Claude Strickland, Jefferson's head trainer. "We came to fight, but the way Derrick fell in that first round, all of his weight came down on that leg. We've come across some hard breaks the last two fights [Jefferson's previous outing was an exhaustion-related TKO loss to David Izon]. We'll be back though. We'd like to fight Maskaev again."

The victory marked the second-straight impressive showing on HBO for Maskaev, who knocked out Hasim Rahman in the eighth round on November 6, 1999. "I give Jefferson a lot of credit; he got up with his ankle hurt," Maskaev said. "I did feel sorry for him, limping around. I took my time, throwing the right combinations. I knew I would get him sooner or later."

Television: HBO

Promoter: Cedric Kushner Promotions

(5-20-00)

Joe Santoliquito

In Joo Cho W 12 Julio Cesar Avila

Seoul, South Korea: Unbeaten lanky footworker Cho, 115, retained the WBC super flyweight title for the fifth time by making good use of his superior speed and outboxing the shorter Mexican Avila, 114¾, to pound out a unanimous decision over 12 frames. The scores were as follows: 118-110 from Takeaki Kanaya (Japan), 118-109 from Kazumasa Kuwata (Japan), and 117-111 from Naparat Srichareon (Thailand).

Avila, the WBC's number-15 contender, was some four inches shorter than the South Korean champ. Cho was in command from the outset, utilizing his height advantage and displaying his speed, outjabbing and countering the willing but unsuccessful mixer. Several times in the early rounds, Cho connected with sharp counter left hooks on the slower Mexican. Avila seldom caught the fast footworker in return.

The fifth saw Cho, eight years his challenger's senior at 31, lift well-timed uppercuts to the chin of his opponent. Moving side to side, the taller Korean outlegged and outmaneuvered him with his better jabs. In the eighth, Cho landed a big right counter and almost toppled the Mexican, who found himself temporarily on rubbery legs. The champ attempted to finish him with a followup, but Avila grabbed him, and both fell down together, depriving Cho of his best opportunity for a knockout. The Mexican showed his heart with an aggressive approach in the ninth, though Cho kept moving to and fro.

If Cho, 18-0 (7), could be criticized in this successful defense, it was for his failure to maintain his effort to finish the affair. In the last two rounds, Cho looked content to keep his huge lead on points without taking a risk as he kept moving around, occasionally countering, and holding when Avila got close. Avila, 16-4 (7), monotonously went forward and repeatedly missed the target, but all the judges generously gave him the 11th due to his effort to catch the still fast-trotting champ. Referee Richie Davis (England) did a good job of separating the repeatedly clinching contestants in the later sessions.

Promoter: Kusung Lee's Poong San Promotions

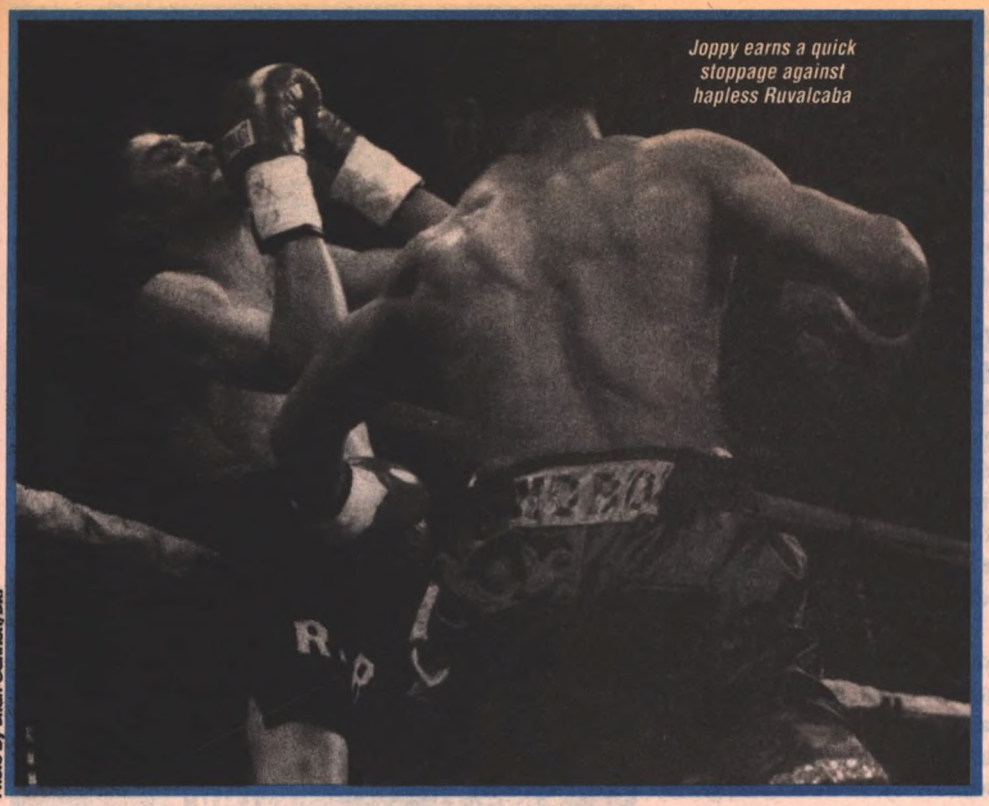
(5-14-00)

Joe Koizumi

William Joppy KO 1 Rito Ruvalcaba

Tunica, Mississippi: The hopeless state of the WBA rankings was exposed still again when Ruvalcaba, the organization's mandatory challenger, was dispatched in less than one round by defending middleweight champion Joppy.

Joppy, 157½, Silver Springs, Maryland, was much more aggressive than usual, and after taking a jab to the body, he leaped in with a left hook to the chin that set up the angular Mexican challenger for



Joppy earns a quick stoppage against hapless Ruvalcaba

Photo by Brian Cannon/DKP

the flush right hand that followed. The punch sent Ruvalcaba, 155¾, staggering backward on unsteady legs, Joppy in hot pursuit.

The 29-year-old Joppy, making the third defense of his second reign, was overanxious at first and missed some wild swings. But he kept firing away and soon had his outclassed challenger ready to go. There was a brief stay of execution when referee Fred Steinwinder III (USA) momentarily stopped the action to warn Ruvalcaba for holding. Shortly thereafter, Joppy crashed home three more rights, the last of which bounced his virtually helpless victim off the ropes and into the waiting arms of Steinwinder, who called a halt at the 1:53 mark.

The win raised Joppy's record to 30-1-1 (23), while the 25-year-old Ruvalcaba fell to 27-3 (24), losing for the first time since Yory Boy Campas stopped him in 1997.

Television: Showtime
Promoter: Don King
(5-20-00)

Julio Gamboa D 12 Felix Machado

Tunica, Mississippi: Despite 12 rounds of furious fighting, neither Gamboa nor Machado was able to take home the IBF title that had been vacated when reigning champ Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson was sent to prison for parole violation in February. Had it not been for the two penalty points referee Elmo Adolph (USA) deducted from Machado's total, one in the fourth and one in the 10th, the Venezuelan would have been the new champ. But as it was, he had to settle for a split draw and a probable rematch.

The bout was a sizzler from the start, and both men scored with powershots throughout. Even though Machado, 18-3-1 (10), was the better technician, and Gamboa, 24-4-1 (15), the harder hitter, it was Machado who scored the bout's only knockdown, flooring Gamboa for the first time in his career with a long left hook to the head in the fourth. Gamboa, Nicaragua, was still buzzed after beating the count, but slugged his way out of trouble when the 27-year-old Machado closed for the finish.

Gamboa, 26, rallied back strongly in the fifth to have his best round, and the pair took turns rocking each other from there on. Both

Showtime's Ferdie Pacheco chats with Gamboa about the decision

Photo by Brian Cannon/DKP

showed tremendous heart and resiliency, and gave the slender crowd on hand at The Grand Casino Event Center a fight to remember.

At the conclusion of 12 rounds, judge Fred Steinwinder III had Gamboa ahead 116-111, while David Taranto saw it 115-114 in Machado's favor. Randy Phillips scored it a 114-114 stalemate. All three judges were from the U.S.A.

Television: Showtime

Promoter: Don King

(5-20-00)

Malcolm Tunacao KO 7 Medgoen Singsurat

Udon Thani, Thailand: Unbeaten Filipino lefty Tunacao impressively captured the WBC flyweight belt as he relentlessly unleashed furious combinations on gory defending champ Medgoen (who fought this time under the new ring name of Medgoen Kratingdaeng-Gym, but who previously fought as Medgoen Toyota-Thailand and Medgoen 3K-Battery, and whose real name is Medgoen Singsurat) and attacked him from all angles en route to an upset TKO victory at 1:53 of the seventh round.

Tunacao, a lanky southpaw, got off to a very good start, dominating the opening canto with his positive attack. But Medgoen, also unbeaten coming in, turned the tables with his busier combinations, and appeared to be in command in the second through fifth sessions. The champ opened a slight cut on the left eyelid of the challenger in the second round.

The Filipino fought back to win the sixth, as he resumed his hot rallies and had the champ bleeding from a gash around the right eye. In the fateful seventh, Tunacao turned loose and battered the champ to the point of becoming groggy. The bout was stopped temporarily and the cut was examined by the ringside physician, but he allowed them to go on. It proved to be a good rest for Tunacao, who had used a great deal of energy trying to finish the champion. He welcomed his second wind and accelerated his attack, rendering Medgoen helpless and forcing a stoppage. There were no knockdowns, but Tunacao had done more than enough to warrant the halt.

Tunacao, the younger brother of one-time world challenger Noel Tunacao (who failed to win the WBA light fly title from Japan's Hiroki Ioka in 1992), raised his mark to 11-0 (7). Medgoen, 20-1 (12), who had dethroned Filipino southpaw Manny Pacquiao on an upset TKO last September, was making his second title defense.

Promoter: Diamond Promotions

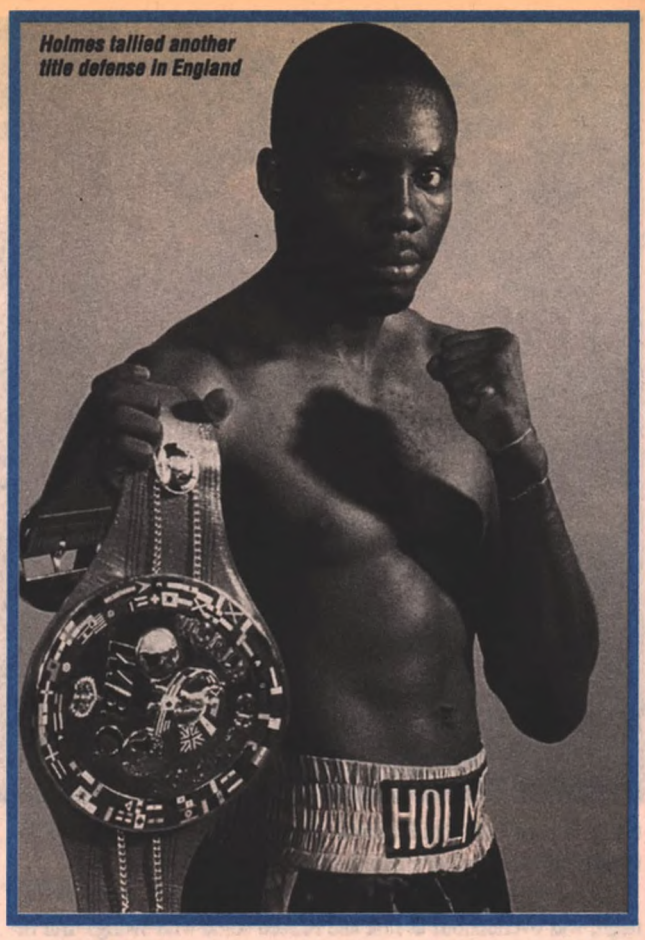
(5-19-00)

Joe Koizumi

Keith Holmes KO 11 Robert McCracken

London, England: Betraying the corrosive effects of 14 months' inactivity, McCracken, 160, England, had no answer to the slippery skills and poise of the accomplished Holmes, 160, Washington, D.C., who retained the WBC middleweight title when the doctor at ringside advised against McCracken continuing in round 11 due to a bad cut over his left eye. The small number of fans who were sporadically placed around Wembley Arena were resigned to the inevitable result from early in the fight.

Holmes, a 32-year-old southpaw vegetarian who had beaten McCracken's compatriot Richie Woodhall in a defense in 1996,



Holmes tallied another title defense in England

boxed off the back foot, and his sharp right leads provided an insurmountable barrier for McCracken. In many of the rounds, the challenger could not even get close enough to score, and on the rare occasions he did, he enjoyed little success. His left eye began closing as early as round five and, although McCracken, 33-1 (21), fired two solid right hands in round six, the champion was never truly tested. McCracken, who had sat for too long in the mandatory challenger's position without a fight, paid the price for his lack of action.

McCracken, 31, hit the canvas for the first time in his career from a hard left in the third and demonstrated great heart to get back to his feet and continue his hopeless quest. McCracken's supporters fell increasingly silent, and Holmes remained in such command that a point deduction off his total in round 10 for holding barely mattered.

With McCracken's face transformed into a crimson mask and with no hope of him pulling off a miraculous rally, referee Alfred Asaro (France) intervened at 1:24 of the 11th, the cut over the Brit's eye spurting blood.

"Robert gave him too much respect," said his trainer, Thel Torrance. "He didn't stick to the game plan because we wanted him to get outside Holmes' left hand. He has trouble with southpaws. He needed a fast start and he didn't get one."

McCracken said: "I couldn't get past the jab, and the blood was going in my eye. The better man won on the night."

Promoter: Panix Promotions

(4-29-00)

Brian Doogan ■

Roy Jones

(Continued from page 21)

ahead, slugging style should be more conducive to an impressive showing. So we can't count "The Executioner" out of the Jones derby yet, especially as he's a naturally smaller man than Jones, which should be to Jones' liking.

One sticking point is that it's unlikely that either Michalczewski or Hopkins would do the PPV numbers required to pay Jones the sort of money he wants to fight them. Michalczewski is hot stuff in Europe, but he's never fought in this country, and the few highlight clips of him that have been televised here do not speak well for his chances of springing an upset. Hopkins is far better known to American fans, but as previously mentioned, he didn't exactly bolster his marketability against Vanderpool.

Regardless of what you might hear, U.S. boxing consumers aren't stupid. That's why Tyson had to take his act overseas. Right now, Oscar De La Hoya is the undisputed king of pay-per-view. Not even Lewis, unless he's fighting Evander Holyfield, can come close. TVKO had approximately 375,000 buys for Lewis' blowout of Michael Grant, compared to roughly 1.25 million buys for the Felix Trinidad-De La Hoya blockbuster. Therefore, it stands to reason that if Jones wants to approach the kind of money "The Golden Boy" gets, he'll have to find an opponent fans want to see him fight badly enough to shell out big bucks. And that means a marquee heavyweight.

Nobody in their right mind would condemn Jones if he simply said that he's too small to fight heavyweights and will stick to guys his own size. After all, nobody criticized Ray Robinson, Carlos Monzon, or Marvelous Marvin Hagler for not taking on Rocky Marciano, Muhammad Ali, and Larry Holmes. And that trio of all-time greats was a lot closer, size-wise, to the heavyweight champions of their era than Jones is to Lewis.

If, on the other hand, Jones is serious about fighting Lewis, which, in light of his recent history, is doubtful, he should go for it. Damn the consequences. Even if Lewis splattered him, Jones' place in history wouldn't be compromised. He would do well to remember Mickey Walker. The former welterweight and middleweight champion had some notable success among the big boys, beating Paulino Uzcudon and drawing with ex-champ Jack Sharkey, before being knocked out by Max Schmeling. The Schmeling loss, however, didn't detract one iota from Walker's legacy or prevent "The Toy Bulldog" from having a shiny plaque hanging in his honor at the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Conversely, whether he realizes it or not, Jones is hurting his credibility by continually talking about fighting heavyweights, but never following through. After all, nobody likes a tease. ■

Tapia-Romero

(Continued from page 23)

"I'm not going to end up like Johnny Tapia."

When Romero said it, it gave life to a rivalry hotter than rich salsa and unleashed a shower of verbal missiles all around town. While Danny Sr. claims the bitterness that existed between Tapia and the Romero family was a mere creation of the media, the biting truth set the stage for an eventual showdown that brought boxing to an unprecedented level of personal conflict.

After knocking off each obstacle in his comeback, Tapia bitterly called Romero out for a challenge, building both the feud and the demand for a mega-match with his younger rival. Soon, Albuquerque became a civil war zone, a melting pot of harsh feelings. You were either a Tapia guy or a Romero guy, nothing in between.

It all spilled out onto the Vegas desert in July 1997, all the fury, all the emotions, all the buildup of the past four years. The site for the grudge match was a fitting one, since it was in the same town that just a month before, a pit bull named Mike Tyson actually gnawed off a chunk of another man's ear in a fit of rage. Tapia-Romero did not hold the global appeal of Tyson-Holyfield II, but the IBF junior bantamweight scrap certainly festered a vicious bite.

Round after round, punch after punch, the Old Man's wisdom prevailed over the Young Buck's vigor as Tapia and Romero vied for sole ownership of their territory. Tapia's claim that he had once "taught Romero how to box" appeared to ring true, as the then-30-year-old veteran made Romero miss and pay, miss and pay, all night long.

Tapia had by then migrated to Big Bear, California, but the IBF crown he snatched that night in the clear-cut unanimous decision was glowing some thousand miles east. Tapia was indeed the reigning king of Albuquerque.

Yet, the repercussions of the ordeal left Tapia and Romero and all their loved ones in utter exhaustion. The Romero camp refused contact with the media for months, and Romero Sr. still declined to discuss the issue with THE RING this past May. Tapia suffered similar hardship.

"The whole experience took a lot out of both of us," said Tapia. "All the things that were said before our fight was out of my system."

So, one night last September, Tapia found himself in his new Vegas home, convincing himself to perform the unthinkable. For a man who had witnessed the murder of his mother as an eight-year-old boy, a man who survived the grisly horrors of prison life, a man who boldly climbed those three steps to engage in hellish hand-to-hand combat night after night after night, it was one of the most difficult and courageous tasks he would ever perform.

The Old Man picked up the phone.

"I decided it was time to call him," said Tapia. "I knew about all the gossip surrounding us and how much it had worn us both down. There was no point of it anymore. We fought our fight and it was time to put it behind us. Misery makes company, so I decided to call him."

The friendship that was born that night has become one of boxing's few feel-good affairs, something the game has become so woefully short of in recent years. For the first time, the Old Man and the Young Buck were seeing eye to eye.

"The anger inside of me went away after we fought," Tapia said. "We have both seen what each other has. There is nothing left to prove and it doesn't make sense to feel bad. We talk a lot on the phone now. He calls me his big brother. We give each other s___ all the time. He calls me the Old Man, and I call him the Young Buck. But the one thing we agreed

(Continued on page 72)

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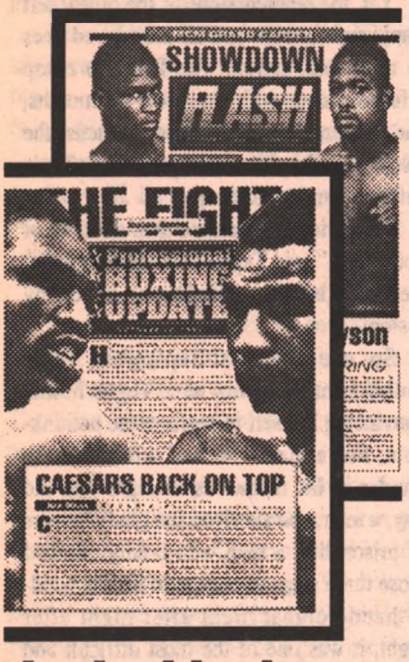

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Tapia-Romero

(Continued from page 71)

on is that we'll never, ever fight each other again."

"We are now brothers in and out of the ring," Danny Jr. recently told Fightnews.com. "Johnny and I have worked out our problems. Johnny has been like a big brother to me, and Teresa [Tapia's wife] has made me part of the family. There was no real reason for animosity between Johnny and me. We sat down and talked about how we could help each other and keep from getting screwed. It's Team Tapia and Team Romero together, one big family."

Hence, it was only fitting that the Romeros and Tapias relinquished all their ammunition in Las Cruces on May 13 for a unique boxing card known as "Guns For Tickets." Two tickets were given to each fan who turned in a lethal firearm, an event that successfully swept up 400 guns and 300 rounds of deadly ammunition from the urban streets.

Tapia and Romero turned in all their ammo as well, opting instead to grace the capacity crowd with thrilling, shoot-'em-up entertainment, Tapia in a 12-round slugfest over Javier Torres, Romero in a similar 12-round decision over Jorge Munoz.

To the boxing world, it was an official peace treaty between the two rivals, an act administered by Teresa Tapia, also Johnny's manager, by cordially adding Romero to the event.

"Johnny has done an awful lot for Danny," said Ron Koch, Romero's lawyer, admitting that Danny's career had staggered since the Tapia fight. "He resurrected Danny's career. He and Teresa turned everything around for him when Danny needed it."

And such is what true friendships and fairy tales are made of. Hollywood has made an entire genre out of the enemies-turned-best friends scenario. Yes, the dark tale of the Old Man and the Young Buck has taken a dramatic turn for the best, as the two friends peer off across the high desert grassland they once battled for supremacy of.

With Tapia now residing in the Vegas desert, the pair is now separated by a lot more than a mile and a couple of street corners. Five hundred miles of Interstate-40 holds the two apart. Yet, after years and years of cold, bitter distance, miraculously, the two have never been closer.

"My shoulder will always be here for him to cry on," said Tapia. "When we got over all the bad feelings of the past, we realized that we're really not all that different. We're just a couple of guys who happen to have a lot in common."

And through five years of verbal slugfests and vengeful anger, Johnny Tapia and Danny Romero were the last to realize this, their vision clouded by fiery passion and deep emotion. They realized that their goals were hung from the same heart strings, a yearning desire to bring a precious fighting glory to the city they both love.

Two brothers. Two champions. One world.

In the northwest corner of New Mexico, it's an epic, age-old battle that no longer needs to be fought.

"It's all okay now," said Tapia. "Albuquerque is still our own little world, and we realize that it's big enough for the both of us." ■

Ted Bodenrader is a freelance writer based in Boston and a regular contributor to this magazine.

Hasim Rahman

(Continued from page 26)

part-time fighter to a full-time fighter. The Rahman-Davis pairing is currently 2-0, as a tuneup win over trialhorse Marion Wilson preceded the Sanders fight.

"I feel like I'm only 50 percent of what I could be," Rahman said. "I've been stagnated for the last couple of years. I haven't been learning. Not that I didn't have good teachers or anything. I'm not knocking anybody, but geographically, it's always been bad for me. Now it's time for me to start learning. Adrian's a tricky guy; he's working with my angles, using my hands to block. We're adding more punches to my arsenal. People haven't seen a lot of uppercuts from me or bodyshots from me, but I've been murdering people to the body in the gym. Adrian made William Joppy an altogether different fighter, and I believe

that transformation's going to be happening with me."

The Monday following the Sanders fight, Rahman was right back in the gym, which Davis takes as a sign that the 27-year-old is serious and believes in his new teacher. Though Rahman weighed in for the Sanders fight at a career-high 245 pounds, it was a slightly deceiving stat because he stepped on the scale in full street clothes. Davis says he's happy with Rahman's weight and conditioning, and sees constant improvement in his skills.

"Nobody really ever taught him how to fight for real," said Davis, who, at the request of Rahman's managers, Steve Nelson and Stan Hoffman, skipped Joppy's fight with Rito Ruvalcaba the same night as the Sanders fight to be in Rahman's corner. "He's a big, strong guy, and he's able to hurt you, but he had no basics. He only had 11 amateur fights, which is really nothing. He just really needed to start all over. All I'm really working on is basic punches, getting his stance right, his hands up high, and constantly jabbing.

"I think, before, he took his career for granted. He already had a whole lot of fights, but he wasn't really learning. But now he's learning, and he knows he's learning. If I tell him to do something, he buckles down and does it. I'm very anxious myself to see him fight again, because I think I'm going to see massive improvement."

An improved Rahman could be a frightening prospect for the rest of the heavyweight division, since he displayed superiority over Tua before the objectionable finish and was ahead of Maskaev in a fight in which he neither trained properly nor boxed intelligently. Tua and Maskaev are generally recognized as the two most deserving contenders beneath champion Lennox Lewis, and, with an important comeback win under his belt, Rahman is now eying a return to that same level. He's expecting to take a relatively easy fight in Baltimore over the summer to keep sharp, and then he'd like to face a David Izon-type opponent. He believes a win over a top-10 heavyweight like Izon would make him attractive enough to

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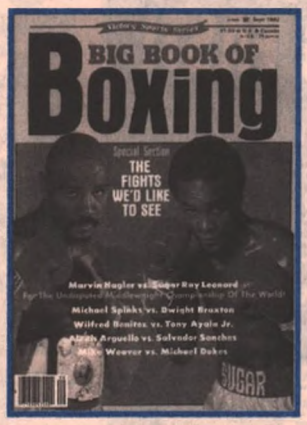
Jan. 1983: An Open Letter To Gerry Cooney: Fight Now—Or Forget It! Also: LaMotta, Duran, Corbett, Palomino-Gavilan dream fight.



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July 1985: Championship Corner: Donald Curry vs. Colin Jones. Also: Napoles-Griffith, Ali, Charles, 10 meanest fighters, Spinks-Galindez dream fight.

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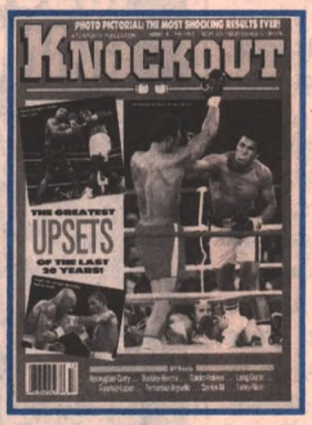

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Hasim Rahman

(Continued from page 73)

HBO to garner him what he really wants: a rematch with Maskaev.

"Izon is tough, but I believe if he wants to sit there and play catch, he's gonna get knocked out," Rahman said. "If I put together a string of wins like that, people might start to believe me when I tell them I wasn't right for the Maskaev fight. Everybody makes an excuse. But the only way to show that this excuse is valid is to fight Maskaev again and beat him. I believe I'm faster than Maskaev. I believe I'm stronger than Maskaev. I believe I'm a better boxer than Maskaev. I believe I can put together a better game plan than Maskaev, and I believe I can stick to it. I just need a chance."

HBO is eager to give him that chance. The network has made quite a few excellent fights over the past couple of years that have helped to clear up the heavyweight picture, and with everyone other than Tua having to wait until at least 2001 for their title shot, we can expect Rahman to be a big part of the upcoming jockeying-for-position fights.

"Rahman had some tough breaks, especially the Tua fight," said HBO Sports Vice President of Programming Kery Davis. "I thought he got hit after the bell and probably should have gotten at least a five-minute recovery period. And if he gets that, maybe he goes on and wins that fight and is now waiting to fight Lennox Lewis. But that didn't happen, so now he's in a position where he really has to fight his way back, and that's what he's doing. Corrie Sanders was a very credible opponent, and, quite frankly, many experts thought that Corrie would win the fight. So whenever you win a fight like that, that's a very good win. Does it vault Rahman into being on the short list for Lennox Lewis? No, not necessarily. But I think a fight with Izon is a good fight, and that could lead to a rematch with Maskaev, which could lead to a title shot.

"The thing that pleases me most is how exciting he's become, which I mentioned to his promoter, Cedric Kushner. He fought Jesse Ferguson a couple of years ago on our network in one of the more dull fights, and also the fight against Obed Sullivan was a relatively dull affair. But that looked nothing like the fighter who fought Tua, Maskaev, or Sanders. So that has certainly added to his attractiveness as a fighter on our network."

It hasn't added to his attractiveness as a husband to his wife, Crystal, who comes to all of Rahman's fights but, in his recent slugfests, has been unable to watch, asking others to update her after she inevitably leaves the arena. Rahman also has two sons, Hasim Jr. and Sharif, and a baby daughter, Amirah, and plenty of options besides boxing: He owns real estate, is working on an apparel catalog geared toward Maryland prisoners who can only purchase clothes by mail-order, and has a small hand in the day-care center his wife recently opened. So when he threatened to quit fighting if he lost to Sanders, saying he didn't really need boxing, he was serious.

And the same mindset applies to his future fights. If he is legitimately beaten, Rahman says that chances are he'll quit boxing. There are no more excuses. Rahman now understands respect, and he recognizes that only if he shows proper amounts of it to every opponent does he stand a chance of fully restoring his own. ■

Referees

(Continued from page 43)

days as an elite referee are probably dwindling, but he is still a dependable, well-respected official.

10. **Eddie Cotton** Cotton (not to be confused with the 1960s light heavyweight contender from Seattle) is coming on as a championship-level referee late in his career, but he is plenty good. He is quick, decisive, and tough. He's eager to enforce the rules, but just as willing to let the boxers put on a show.

He gave Campas every opportunity to come back in his IBF junior middleweight title fight with Vargas, because while Campas was tasting plenty of leather, he was never in trouble of being seriously hurt. The fight ended when Campas decided he'd had enough, but he couldn't leave the ring saying that Cotton didn't give him the chance to keep the belt.

Cotton was also the referee in the second Riddick Bowe-Andrew Golota fight, and despite the fact that fans rioted when Golota was disqualified in their first fight, he didn't hesitate to DQ Golota again when "The Foul Pole" dug a vicious combination into Bowe's cup in the ninth round. ■

Kevin Iole covers boxing for the Las Vegas Review-Journal and is a frequent contributor to this magazine.

Fight Films

(Continued from page 47)

bouts versus Alonzo Johnson, Alex Miteff, Billy Daniels, Archie Moore, and Sonny Banks.

Jacobs was a huge Clay fan and shared the opinion of other collectors that old-timers were crude and inferior to their successors. He delighted in showing the nonbelievers films of their heroes, laughing when they could not even identify some of the famous boxers. Yet Jacobs was also a best friend to the pioneer boxers. He, more than anyone else, uncovered and preserved them for the ages, warts and all.

While many of the old nitrate films are surely destroyed, some rare footage still surfaces to this day. Fosco owns the famous Harry Greb training film, five minutes of footage of Greb preparing for the Mickey Walker fight. The film was found in the archives at the University of South Carolina. Another Fosco discovery was a near complete version of the first Dempsey-Tunney fight. Fosco bought two reels, one of which showed prefight prep and every round except seven and eight. The second reel, which had the missing rounds, was damaged beyond salvage. His latest discovery may be his best: just over three minutes of film of a 1925 sparring session between Gene Tunney and a 59-year-old Corbett.

"There's lots of stuff that still exist in archives," Fosco believes. "It's just that unless there's an interest, it will be lost forever." ■

Eric Bottjer is a matchmaker, freelance writer, and historian based in Long Island, New York.

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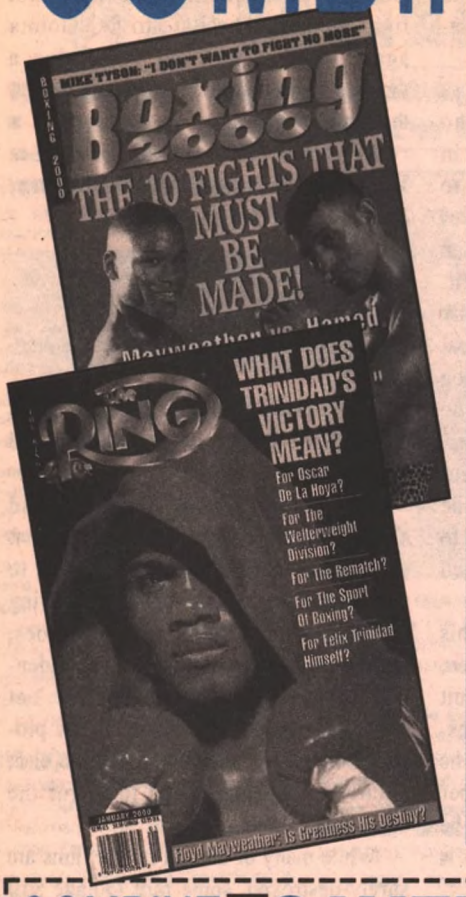

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Al Palzer

(Continued from page 51)

every chance to make good. I hope he has enough to retire on."

But Palzer plowed ahead under a new pilot who made O'Rourke look like Mother Teresa. Years after the fact, manager Mike McNulty sensitively recalled Palzer's final bout, against contender Fred Fulton, and its surprising outcome.

"In the first three rounds, Fred knocked Palzer down about 11, 12 times. [Referee] George [Duffy] walked over to our corner and said it was over. I pleaded with George to let the murder last one more round. Duffy agreed. Palzer's left eye had a lump over it and under it as big as a head of lettuce. His face was cut and bleeding.

"At the start of the fourth, Fulton crashed a left against Al's chin, sending Palzer against the ropes. On the rebound, Plazer cocked his left and—*crash*—Fulton started to snore."

If that was going out with a bang, Palzer trumped himself in 1917. By then, he was back with Henry and Martha on their new farm in Perham, Minnesota. It was not, however, an idyllic reunion. Henry Palzer was as tall as his famous son, and went about 260 pounds. According to later courtroom testimony, Henry "thought that Al was as great a man as the President of the United States." But judging from the old man's constant state of drunkenness, Jim Beam and Jack Daniel were greater still. Henry even kept a five-gallon jug next to his bed.

Just before midnight on July 25, the senior Palzer came home wasted, and when Martha ragged on him, he grabbed a rifle and shot her in both arms. Awakened in his upstairs room by the noise, Palzer raced down to save his mother, whereupon, according to the formal indictment, his father sent a slug "through the right forearm and into the body of the said Al Palzer, just above the abdomen and [it] penetrated the right lobe of his liver and the large intestines into the backbone ..."

What happened next was as mind-boggling as his comebacks against Wells or Fulton. Without anybody yelling at him through a megaphone, Palzer got up and ran a mile-and-a-half to the hospital. But he died of his injuries.

On December 4, 1917, when Henry copped a plea to first-degree manslaughter and was sentenced to a year in prison for killing his son, his lawyer called Al "one of the great athletes of America" and "a kind-hearted, genial fellow, although his business"—prize fighting—"was against him."

What happened was a tragedy, of course, but given newspaper reports that he was training for a comeback when he was killed, the 28-year-old Palzer was probably destined to buy the farm before his time no matter what. ■

Pete Ehrmann is a freelance writer based in West Allis, Wisconsin, and a regular contributor to this magazine.

Dwight Qawi

(Continued from page 55)

Dwight is a helluva guy. We still talk today."

Another former rival, who has gone a similar path as Qawi by working with children, still resides in Philadelphia and looks on Qawi fondly, though you would never be able to tell by the way Saad Muhammad attacked him in their two fights.

"Dwight did me wrong by beating me up. He took away my future," Saad Muhammad said, laughing. "Dwight was a bad man; he was a hard guy. That's what made him so hard to fight. His background and his living made him tough. He was a very, very hard hitter. I didn't like him in the ring because he tried to beat me for my title. But we were never enemies outside the ring. I always respected Dwight."

Because of all the wars he fought, Saad Muhammad's motor skills have dulled and his speech is slurred. When told of this, Qawi hesitated, and asked two or three different times if his old rival is okay.

"You have to excuse me for feeling a little bad," Qawi said, staring blankly ahead. "I fought him and I didn't want to contribute to that. You both step in the ring with a job to do, but Saad was always a good man. I wouldn't want to see him like that. Are you sure he's okay?"

As for Qawi's future, he hopes to continue working with kids and expand his radio and TV exposure. He is making steps in the media area through association with Tom Qualiano, who hosts *Tom Qualiano On Sports*, a five-day-a-week sports anthology program based in Atlantic City. Plus, Qawi has recently done some TV work as a color analyst on a few local Atlantic City fight shows.

"As time goes by, the intimidation eventually goes by," Qawi said with a snicker. "I had a heck of a career and people respected that, maybe more now than when I was actually fighting. People come up to me all of the time now. The things is, I can appreciate more what I did today than when I was living it. I learned this is the day I live in and that it's good to be alive. I wouldn't have said that before, because I wasn't as grateful as I am today. This is my second lease on life. My religion is very important. It means everything to me. I believe in a next life and an unseen God. The spirit we all have goes on. I just started to appreciate that. That's a gift."

Like Qawi. ■

New Face

(Continued from page 58)

"Me and my brothers, we all boxed. Curtis never turned pro, and he never really took it too seriously. Ray had a promising future; a lot of people in Las Vegas still talk about him. When Curtis died, it was hard to deal with, but Ray died the day after I turned 15 years old. I decided then to just stop boxing."

And invite trouble into his young life. As an amateur, the 5'9" Thompson posted an 80-7 record, which included a pair of victories over Olympic gold medalist and former WBA super welterweight champ David Reid in the Golden Gloves national semifinals. But before everything "The Boss" touched almost turned to gold, he went through a tough stage between the ages of 15 and 17. He was on a dangerous path in his hometown of Buffalo, New York, when boxing brought back too many memories of Ray and Curtis. He felt his only recourse was to take some time off. Only that hiatus from boxing was longer than Thompson anticipated.

"I was doing a lot, running the streets, I got off into other things," Thompson said. "I was doing some crazy things like

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Beginning in 1988, this popular magazine went to an all-new format, featuring a fresh look at the fight game through the eyes of its top-notch writers, columnists, and photographers. "The Fight Fan's Magazine" has, since that time, earned recognition as one of the top boxing magazines around.

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New Face

(Continued from page 77)

getting into fights. My father would always get on me about getting back into the gym, but I was running with gangs and doing some bad things. Strong-arm stuff, no drugs, or dealing drugs. I had some meetings with the law, you could say.

"That time was hard, and it was kind of fun in a way being out there. You think you're invincible in life, and there were a lot of times I could have been killed, but I didn't care. I look back then compared to today's world, things weren't that bad. Today, you'd get shot for doing some of the things I did. Guns weren't involved a lot like they are now. I did some stupid, stupid things, and I got caught a couple of times. When I was 15, I was caught for strong-arm robbery and put on probation."

Woodrow Thompson had seen enough. He lost two sons and was not about to lose a third because of a lapse in judgment. So he called on an old friend, esteemed veteran referee Richard Steele, who was living out in Las Vegas, and asked Steele if Ross could come and stay with him while his son tried to regain his focus. Steele said yes, and Thompson packed his bags and left Buffalo for the glittery lights of Vegas.

"Once I left Buffalo and went to Vegas, my whole life changed," Thompson said. "I started boxing again. Most of the guys I knew growing up are still doing the same things, hanging out on the corners, waiting for something to happen. I look at them and think if I never left Buffalo, I would be doing the same things. The majority of guys I knew have never changed. I always think that could be me. I saved my life by leaving Buffalo."

Thompson's return to boxing also provided someone close to him with a special gift: It brought a smile to his father's face before he died.

"He was real proud of me when I won in the amateurs," Thompson said. "As a pro, my father always thought I could do better. I still think I could be a better pro. I'm too talented to have lost some of the fights that I did."

One fight that fits that description is Thompson's seventh-round disqualification loss to Adrian Stone in '95. It was a fight in which, Thompson admits, he lost his composure, arguing with the referee and trying roughhouse tactics. His other two defeats came against WBA welterweight champ James Page and welterweight contender Oba Carr, a fight Thompson took on three weeks notice and a month after his father died.

"I should have never taken that fight," Thompson said. "I tried to get back into the gym and get myself in shape. Believe me, I wasn't at my best."

Thompson had a real aggressive style coming up, as he was always taught by his father to put pressure on an opponent. As he grew older, Thompson became more of a counterpuncher with speed.

"Thompson's a good fighter," recalled Page, who beat Thompson via 10-round decision in '96. "I remember him being fast, and he takes a helluva punch. I remember hitting him with some shots, and he didn't go down. I wasn't able to take him out, but I wasn't in the best shape, either. I hope Thompson does beat Vargas. I think Ross' speed could give Vargas some problems. I'd like to see him beat Vargas because that will show what a good fighter he is, and that will mean something to me because I beat Thompson."

As of press time, Thompson was slated to fight Vargas on August 26, possibly in Las Vegas.

"There's no way, if I'm in shape, that Vargas will beat me," Thompson said. "I don't see him as having a lot of great things. His hand speed is good, his power is good, but I don't see anything great about him. And I don't want him to look past me, making excuses when he loses. I know his personality. He tries to punk people; he gets up in people's faces. He won't do that to me.

"I want him to hate me before the fight. I really want him to be at his best. The better he is, the better that's going to make me. It's going to one of those fights where people on HBO are going to be saying, 'Where did this kid come from?' Only the people close to me know my ability and know my potential. I know my father and brothers are watching. I have to carry on for everyone else; I have to be the one. God left it up to me." ■

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Nov. 1999: De La Hoya vs. Trinidad: "It's Gonna Come Down To Who The Hell Wants It Most!" Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Arturo Gatti. Plus: Roy Jones, Sugar Shane Mosley, Vassily Jirov.

Dec. 1999: David Reid & Fernando Vargas: Olympic Teammates On A Collision Course! Color Pinup: Zab Judah. Interview: Ike Ibeabuchi. Plus: Vitaly Klitschko, Antonio Tarver, Mike Tyson.

Holiday 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): Lewis-Holyfield II: Why We Demand A Knockout! Color Pinup: Sharmba Mitchell. Interview: Paulie Ayala. Plus: James Toney, James Page & Terronn Millett, decade review.

Jan. 2000: Fool's Gold? Trinidad May Have Tarnished Oscar's Image Forever! Color Pinup: Paulie Ayala. Interview: Tony Ayala Jr. Plus: David Reid, Johnny Nelson.

Feb. 2000: Breakout 2000: Who's Going To Lead The Way In Y2K? Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bob Arum. Plus: Shane Mosley, Wise-Chavez, Iran Barkley.

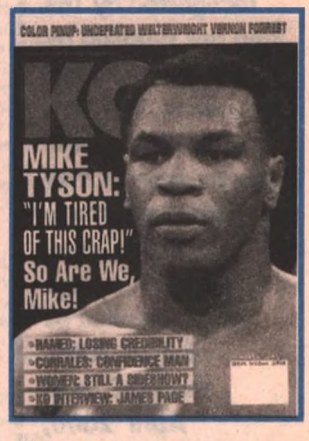
March 2000: Mike Tyson: "I'm Tired Of This Crap!" So Are We, Mike! Color Pinup: Vernon Forrest. Interview: James Page. Plus: Erik Morales & Naseem Hamed, Diego Corrales, women's boxing.

May 2000: Michael Grant vs. Lennox Lewis—25 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Paul Spadafora. Interview: Dan Goossen. Plus: Floyd Mayweather, Johnny Tapia, southpaws.

June 2000: Lewis vs. Grant: Who Will Win ... And Why. Color Pinup: Vitaly Klitschko. Interview: Sharmba Mitchell. Plus: Shane Mosley, David Izon, 2000 Hall of Fame.

July 2000: Today's Fighters, Tomorrow's Hall Of Famers. Color Pinup: Keith Holmes. Interview: Shane Mosley. Plus: Zab Judah, Morales-Barrera, Wayne Braithwaite.

August 2000: Mosley Prepares For Oscar: "It Will Be Like The First Round Of Hagler-Hearns. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Plus: Vargas-Quartey, Thomas Hearns, Felix Trinidad, common sense vs. cowardice.



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WORLDWIDE RATINGS

The ratings of the three major governing bodies recognized by The Ring are supplied by the organizations themselves. They are updated on these pages as soon as they are made available to us. In this issue, the WBA ratings were complied as of April 2000, the WBC as of April 2000, and the IBF as of March 2000.

HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Lennox Lewis (GB)	C	C	C
John Ruiz (USA)	1	1	5
Michael Grant (USA)	2	12	2
Evander Holyfield (USA)	3	2	3
Mike Tyson (USA)	4	4	–
Wladimir Klitchko (UKR)	5	3	12
David Tua (NZ)	6	5	1
Larry Donald (USA)	7	7	4
Henry Akinwande (GB)	8	9	9
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	9	–	–
Andrew Golota (POL)	10	–	–
Oleg Maskaev (UKR)	12	6	10
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	–	8	8
David Izon (NIG)	25	10	11
Danell Nicholson (USA)	–	–	6
Chris Byrd (USA)	–	–	7

CRUISERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Juan Carlos Gomez (CUBA)	C	–	–
Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)	–	C	–
Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)	–	–	C
James Toney (USA)	1	2	5
Marcelo Dominguez (ARG)	2	4	6
Alex Gonzalez (PR)	3	10	–
Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)	4	–	12
Torsten May (GER)	5	9	2
Virgil Hill (USA)	6	1	7
Imamu Mayfield (USA)	7	5	9
Lou Del Valle (USA)	8	–	–
Louis Azille (DR)	9	–	–
Alexander Gurov (UKR)	10	–	–
Alexander Gurov (UKR)	–	3	–
Saul Montana (MEX)	–	6	8
Arthur Williams (USA)	16	7	3
Valery Vikhor (LAT)	–	8	–
Alex Gonzales (USA)	–	–	1
Andre Purlette (GUY)	–	–	4
Carl Thompson (GB)	14	12	10

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Roy Jones (USA)	C	C	C
Michael Nunn (USA)	1	9	–
Clinton Woods (GB)	2	10	7
Eric Harding (USA)	3	5	2
Reggie Johnson (USA)	4	8	6
Yawe Davis (ITA)	5	–	–
Antonio Tarver (USA)	6	–	1
David Telesco (USA)	7	6	9
Greg Wright (USA)	8	–	–
Thomas Ulrich (GER)	9	–	–
Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)	10	7	3
Richard Hall (USA)	12	1	–
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	2	12
Frank Liles (USA)	–	3	–
Derrick Harmon (USA)	11	4	–
Billy Lewis (USA)	28	11	4
Thomas Tate (USA)	–	–	5
Jimmy Crawford (USA)	–	–	8
Lincoln Carter (USA)	16	–	10

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Markus Beyer (GER)	C	–	–
Bruno Girard (FRA)	–	C	5
Sven Ottke (GER)	–	–	C
Glenn Catley (GB)	1	8	–
Eric Lucas (CAN)	2	–	–
Mario Velt (GER)	3	3	8
Richie Woodhall (GB)	4	–	–
Omar Sheika (USA)	5	–	7
Dana Rosenblatt (USA)	6	2	–
Charles Brewer (USA)	7	7	1
David Starie (GB)	8	11	–
Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)	9	1	–
Stephane Ouellet (CAN)	10	–	–
Byron Mitchell (USA)	–	4	–
Manuel Siacca (PR)	–	5	–
Mike Makata (NZ)	–	6	–
Fredric Alvarez (SWE)	17	9	9
Mads Larsen (DEN)	11	10	–
James Butler (USA)	27	–	2
Syd Vanderpool (CAN)	–	–	3
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	–	–	4
Tocker Pudwill (USA)	–	–	6
Guy Waters (AUSTRL)	12	–	10

MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Keith Holmes (USA)	C	–	–
William Joppy (USA)	–	C	–
Bernard Hopkins (USA)	–	–	C
Robert McCracken (GB)	1	–	–
Erland Betare (FRA)	2	–	–
Kevin Palmer (USA)	3	–	–
Hassine Cherifi (FRA)	4	6	6
Davide Ciarlante (ITA)	5	–	–
Howard Eastman (GB)	6	2	7
Lonnie Bradley (USA)	7	11	–
Ali Ennebati (FRA)	8	–	8
Davey Hilton (CAN)	9	10	4
Antwun Echols (USA)	10	7	–
Rito Ruvalcaba (MEX)	–	1	9
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	11	3	–
Julio Cesar Green (DR)	–	4	–
Ramon Moyano (ARG)	–	5	–
Darren Obah (AUSTRL)	–	8	–
Johnson Tshuma (ZIM)	13	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Antwun Echols (USA)	–	–	2
Brian Barbosa (USA)	14	–	3
Dana Rosenblatt (USA)	–	–	5
Carl Daniels (USA)	–	–	10

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Francisco Castillejo (SPA)	C	–	–
Felix Trinidad (PR)	–	C	–
Fernando Vargas (USA)	–	–	C
Tony Marshall (USA)	1	–	–
David Reid (USA)	2	2	–
Roman Karmazin (RUS)	3	7	8
Mamadou Thiam (FRA)	4	1	–
Anthony Jones (USA)	5	–	12
Alfred Ankamah (GHA)	6	–	–
Tony Badea (ROM)	7	–	–
Quirino Garcia (MEX)	8	–	–
Kevin Kelly (USA)	9	8	–
Carl Daniels (USA)	10	5	–
Jose Flores (MEX)	–	3	–
Winky Wright (USA)	–	4	3
Ike Quartey (GHA)	–	6	6
Julio Cesar Vazquez (ARG)	–	9	–
Ricardo Mayorga (NIC)	24	10	–
Ross Thompson (USA)	25	–	1
Paul Vaden (USA)	12	–	2
Bronco McKart (USA)	14	–	4
Emmett Linton (USA)	–	11	5
Pat Coleman (USA)	–	–	7
Marshall Simpson (GUY)	–	–	9
Evans Ashira (DEN)	–	–	10

WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Oscar De La Hoya (USA)	C	–	–
James Page (USA)	–	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Shane Mosley (USA)	1	2	2
Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)	2	7	5
Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)	3	–	–
Vernon Forrest (USA)	4	8	3
Alessandro Duran (ITA)	5	11	–
Derrell Coley (USA)	6	–	–
Nicolas Cervera (COL)	7	–	–
Kofi Jantuah (GHA)	8	–	–
Andrei Pestraiev (RUS)	9	–	–
Carlos Baldomir (ARG)	10	9	–
Andrew Lewis (GUY)	22	1	10
Michael Trabant (GERE)	23	3	–
Arturo Gatti (USA)	–	4	–
Thomas Damgaard (DEN)	12	5	–
Oba Carr (USA)	14	6	4
Frank Olsen (DEN)	16	10	6
Raul Frank (USA)	–	–	1
Andrew Murray (USA)	–	–	7
Sam Garr (USA)	15	–	8
Scott Dixon (GB)	–	–	9

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)	C	–	–
Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	–	C	–
Zab Judah (USA)	–	–	C
Julio Cesar Chavez (MEX)	1	–	–
Oktay Urkal (TUR)	2	4	6
Diobelis Hurtado (CUB)	3	3	–
Arturo Gatti (CAN)	4	–	–
Gianluca Branco (ITA)	5	–	–

Vince Phillips (USA)	6	–	–
Mikhail Krivolapov (RUS)	7	–	–
Ahmed Santos (USA)	8	–	–
Ricky Quiles (USA)	9	–	–
Teddy Reid (USA)	10	–	10
Hector Camacho Jr (PR)	–	1	5
Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)	–	2	–
Fred Pendleton (USA)	–	5	–
Khalid Rahilou (FRA)	–	6	–
Antonio Diaz (USA)	15	7	–
Elio Ortiz (VEN)	–	8	–
Demetrio Ceballos (PAN)	–	9	–
Giuseppi Laury (ITA)	30	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Allan Vester (DEN)	18	–	3
Cesar Leiva (ARG)	–	–	4
Jason Rowland (GB)	–	–	7
Gabriel Mapuoka (FRA)	12	–	8
Jan Bergman (SA)	–	–	9

LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Steve Johnston (USA)	C	–	–
Gilbert Serrano (VEN)	–	C	–
Paul Spadafora (USA)	–	–	C
Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)	1	–	–
Cesar Bazan (MEX)	2	–	4
Lovemore Ndou (SA)	3	–	6
Rick Yoshimura (JAP)	4	4	–
Hector Camacho Jr (USA)	5	–	–
Billy Schwer (GB)	6	–	–
Daomai Sithkodam (THAI)	7	–	–
Julien Lorcy (FRA)	8	2	5
James Leija (USA)	9	–	8
Alberto Sicurella (ARG)	10	3	–
Vacant	–	1	–
Oscar Garcia Cano (SPA)	12	5	–
Stefano Zoff (ITA)	–	6	–
Jean-Baptiste Mendy (FRA)	22	7	–
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	8	–
Edson Xuxa Nascimento (BRA)	–	9	–
Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)	–	10	–
Billy Irwin (CAN)	21	–	1
Joel Perez (USA)	–	–	2
Ivan Robinson (USA)	18	–	3
Wilfrido Ruiz (USA)	–	–	7
Angel Manfredy (USA)	–	–	9
Mike Griffith (USA)	–	–	10

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Floyd Mayweather (USA)	C	–	–
Jongkwon Baek (KOR)	–	C	–
Diego Corrales (USA)	–	–	C
Jesus Chavez (USA)	1	–	5
Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)	2	–	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	3	–	–
Boris Sinitsin (RUS)	4	7	–
Tiger Ari (PHIL)	5	–	–
Goyo Vargas (MEX)	6	–	–
Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)	7	–	–
Robert Garcia (USA)	8	11	9
Alejandro Gonzalez (MEX)	9	–	–
Dennis Holbaek (DEN)	10	–	–
Joel Casamayor (CUB)	–	1	–
Lakva Sim (MON)	–	2	–
Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)	–	3	–
Yong Soo Choi (KOR)	–	4	–
Ernesto Zepeda (MEX)	–	5	–
Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)	14	6	–
Luis Navarro (USA)	–	8	10
Wilfredo Vazquez (PR)	–	9	–
Derrick Gainer (USA)	–	10	4
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	13	–	3
Carlos Hernandez (USA)	–	–	6
Ernesto Zepeda (MEX)	29	–	7
Santos Rebolledo (VEN)	–	–	8

FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Guty Espadas (MEX)	C	–	–
Fred Norwood (USA)	–	C	–
Paul Ingle (GB)	–	–	C
Injin Chi (KOR)	1	–	–
Tony Wehbee (AUS)	2	–	10
Edgar Barcenas (MEX)	3	–	–
Istvan Kovacs (HUN)	4	6	–
Luisito Espinosa (PHIL)	5	–	–
Takeo Imaoka (JAP)	6	–	–
Augie Sanchez (USA)	7	–	7
Steve Robinson (GB)	8	–	–
Raul Perez (MEX)	9	–	–
Kevin Kelley (USA)	10	10	12
Pablo Chacon (ARG)	–	1	3
Nana Konadu (GHA)	–	2	–
Victor Polo (COL)	–	3	8
Philip Ndou (SA)	–	4	–
Angel Vasquez (PR)	–	5	11
Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)	14	7	–
Richard Carrillo (VEN)	–	8	–
Radford Beasley (USA)	12	9	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	–	–	2
Manuel Medina (MEX)	16	–	4
Frankie Toledo (USA)	–	–	5
Oscar Larios (MEX)	–	–	6
Junior Jones (USA)	–	–	9

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Erik Morales (MEX)	C	–	–
Clarence Adams (USA)	–	C	–
Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)	–	–	C
Michael Brodie (GB)	1	7	2
Willie Jorrin (USA)	2	11	3
Sergei Devakov (UKR)	3	–	–
Wayne McCullough (IRE)	4	–	–
Oscar Larios (MEX)	5	–	–
Cesar Soto (MEX)	6	–	–
Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)	7	–	12
Enrique Sanchez (MEX)	8	9	5
Israel Vazquez (MEX)	9	–	8
Shin Yamato (JAP)	10	–	–
Antonio Cermeno (VEN)	–	1	–
Yobert Ortega (VEN)	23	2	–
Bugiarso (INDO)	–	3	–
Nestor Garza (MEX)	–	4	–
Vladislav Antonov (RUS)	24	5	6
Jose Luis Valbuena (VEN)	–	6	–
Jose Rojas (VEN)	–	8	–
Osamu Sato (JAP)	–	10	–
Ernesto Gray (COL)	–	–	1
Jesus Salud (USA)	–	–	4
Agapito Sanchez (DR)	17	–	7
Hector Julia Avila (DR)	12	–	9
John Johnson (USA)	16	–	10

BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)	C	–	–
Paul Ayala (USA)	–	C	–
Tim Austin (USA)	–	–	C
Cuauhtemoc Gomez (MEX)	1	4	8
Jess Maca (PHIL)	2	–	–
Adan Vargas (MEX)	3	7	–
Dario Azuaga (PAR)	4	–	–
Gerardo Martinez (MEX)	5	–	–
Hugo Dianzo (MEX)	6	–	–
Nana Konadu (GHA)	7	–	5
Ricardo Barajas (MEX)	8	–	–
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	9	–	–
Evangelio Perez (PAN)	10	11	–
Vacant	–	1	–
Sahoiu Sithchai Condo (THAI)	–	2	–
Danny Romero (USA)	–	3	–
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	–	5	–
Fernando Montiel (MEX)	–	6	–
Johnny Bredahl (DEN)	–	8	–
Rafael Marquez (MEX)	13	9	12
Jorge Eliecer Julio (COL)	–	10	–
Jesus Perez (COL)	23	–	1
Arthur Johnson (USA)	12	–	2
Jose Mendoza (COL)	–	–	3
Pete Frissina (USA)	24	–	4
Noel Wilders (GB)	22	–	6
Paul Lloyd (GB)	–	–	7
Mauricio Martinez (PAN)	–	–	9
Steve Dotse (GHA)	–	–	10

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
In Joo Cho (KOR)	C	–	–
Hideki Todaka (JAP)	–	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Eric Morel (USA)	1	–	–
Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)	2	–	8
Joel Luna Zarate (MEX)	3	9	10
Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)	4	–	6
Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)	5	–	–
Masanori Tokuyama (JAP)	6	–	–
Seungrok Choi (KOR)	7	–	–
Trinidad Mendoza (MEX)	8	–	–
Fernando Montiel (MEX)	9	–	–
Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)	10	–	–
Leo Gamez (VEN)	–	1	–
Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	–	2	4
Jesus Rojas (VEN)	–	3	–
Edison Torres (VEN)	–	4	–
Felix Machado (VEN)	–	5	2
Jesper Jensen (DEN)	–	6	–
Akihigo Nago (JAP)	14	7	–
Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)	–	8	5
Lester Fuentes (NIC)	25	10	–
Julio Gamboa (NIC)	–	–	1
Luis Bolanos (COL)	–	12	3
Raul Juarez (MEX)	–	–	7
Francisco Tejedor (COL)	–	–	9

FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)	C	–	–
Sornpichai Kratchingdaeng (THAI)	–	C	–
Irene Pacheco (COL)	–	–	C
Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)	1	–	–
Alex Ali Baba (GHA)	2	–	7
David Guerault (FRA)	3	4	1
Gabriel Mira (MEX)	4	–	–
Mike Trejo (USA)	5	10	4
Saen Sor Ploenchit (THAI)	6	–	–
Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)	7	–	–
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	8	9	3
Everardo Morales (MEX)	9	–	–
Damaen Kelly (GB)	10	–	–
Jose Bonilla (VEN)	–	1	–
Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)	–	2	–
Panieng Okuda (THAI)	–	3	–
Eric Morel (USA)	–	5	–
Hugo Soto (ARG)	–	6	12
Jose Lopez (VEN)	–	7	–
Gilberto Gonzalez (VEN)	–	8	11
Vacant	–	–	2
Zoltan Lunka (TUR)	20	–	5
Pedro Pena (USA)	–	–	6
Jose Landin (USA)	–	–	8
Angel Priolo (COL)	–	–	9
Ferid Ben Jeddou (TUN)	–	–	10

JR. FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Yosam Choi (KOR)	C	–	–
Pichitnoi C. Siriwat (THAI)	–	C	–
Ricardo Lopez (MEX)	–	–	C
Jorge Arce (MEX)	1	6	9
Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)	2	9	–
Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)	3	3	5
Hidenobu Honda (JAP)	4	2	–
Panieng Sasiprabha (THAI)	5	–	–
Bebis Mendoza (COL)	6	–	–
Jose Luis Zepeda (MEX)	7	–	–
Eric Ortiz (MEX)	8	–	–
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)	9	–	–
Nelson Dieppa (DR)	10	7	–
Rosendo Alvárez (NIC)	–	1	–
Pongsaklek Nakornton (THAI)	–	4	–
Yura Dimas (MON)	–	5	–
Masibulele Makepula (SA)	–	8	–
Jose Sanjuanelo (COL)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Will Grigsby (USA)	–	12	3
Ratanapol Sor Vorapin (THAI)	–	11	4
Pongsaklek Sithkanongsak (THAI)	–	–	6
Alex Sanchez (PR)	–	–	7
Domingo Guillen (DR)	–	–	8
Mickey Cantwell (GB)	–	–	10

STRAWWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)	C	–	–
Noel Arumbulet (VEN)	–	C	–
Zolani Petelo (SA)	–	–	C
Daniel Reyes (COL)	1	3	1
Erdene Chuluun (MON)	2	–	–
Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)	3	–	–
Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)	4	–	10
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	5	–	–
Fernando Luna (MEX)	6	–	–
Juan Keb Baas (MEX)	7	–	–
Makoto Suzuki (JAP)	8	12	–
Jaewon Kim (KOR)	9	–	–
Manny Melchor (PHIL)	10	–	–
Joma Gamboa (PHIL)	–	1	–
Chana Porpaoin (THAI)	–	2	–
Jose Garcia (COL)	–	4	–
Udomdet Porpaoin (THAI)	–	5	–
Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)	15	6	–
Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)	–	7	–
Satoru Abe (JAP)	16	8	–
Fasan Pongsawan (THAI)	–	9	–
Atsushi Sai (JAP)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Mickey Cantwell (GB)	–	–	3
Rocky Palma (JAP)	–	–	4
Faisol Akbar (INDO)	–	–	5
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	–	–	6
Rocky Lim (TWN)	–	–	7
Alberto Rossel (PERU)	–	–	8
Juan Herrera (COL)	–	–	9

CLASSIC

ALI OUTFOUGHT, OUTLASTED, AND OUTWITTED FOREMAN IN A CLASSIC UPSET

By Nat Loubet

Muhammad Ali became the second man in ring history to regain the heavyweight championship of the world. The first was Floyd Patterson who took his title back from Ingemar Johansson in 1960.

The clock reached 2:58 of the eighth round when a crashing left hook followed by a solid right cross dumped George Foreman to the canvas where he lay on his stomach. As the count reached four he rolled over and began a slow rise to his feet. He looked toward Dick Sadler in his corner, got to one knee, and, as the 10-count was made by referee Zack Clayton, Foreman made an effort to beat the final second. He just lost out, and so the title changed hands, and once again Ali stands on the throne he boasted to all who would listen that he would occupy after the fight.

Clayton was the first black man to referee a world heavyweight championship fight. His first active refereeing job was the second Walcott-Charles meeting on June 5, 1952. This was Clayton's third time acting as an arbiter in a world heavyweight title contest. Clayton added to his status as a referee in as much as some scribes felt Zack might be swayed emotionally to one side or the other. This he emphatically did not do and provided one of the better refereeing jobs accomplished by any third man in a world title fight.

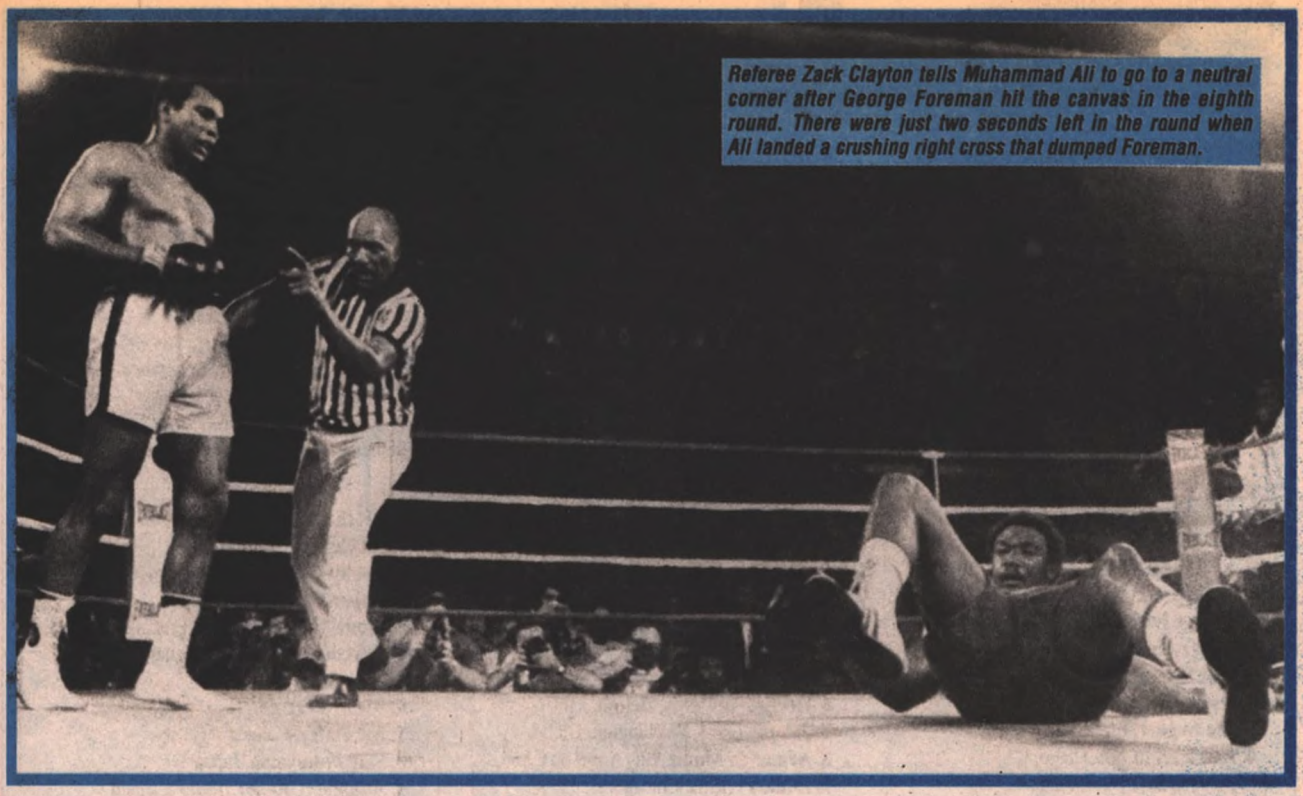
The bout could have been a hard one to referee since from the opening bell it was a "Holy War" with Foreman the aggressor, jumping out to meet Ali in the challenger's own corner.

The round-by-round happenings followed a pattern. Ali would meet the oncharging Foreman with flicking lefts, many of which missed, until Foreman, as had been expected, broke through Ali's guard, bending the challenger back across the ropes, landing solid, punishing bodyblows that landed on Ali's rib cage with maddening regularity.

Weight didn't play much of a part in the proceedings. Ali, at 216½, a good weight for him, was in better shape than he has been since he came back to boxing in 1970. Foreman, who by his own statement in a press conference here, weighed 250 pounds in August, tipped the scales at 220, a good fighting weight for the champion.

Immediately before the contest, various

From THE RING, January 1975



Referee Zack Clayton tells Muhammad Ali to go to a neutral corner after George Foreman hit the canvas in the eighth round. There were just two seconds left in the round when Ali landed a crushing right cross that dumped Foreman.

sections of the crowd took up the chant that blended into a symphony of several phrases, overpowering to the point where one's hair began to prickle, "Ali-bomaye."

Ali was the country's hero. Ask any "citizen." He will respond immediately, "Ali—my man." Very few dissident voices were heard and practically all were ready to accept Foreman were he to win. A fanfare of music indigenous to Africa, including the Zaire national anthem, heralded the entrance of Muhammad Ali, right hand extended above his head. He led his own cheer.

After what seemed like an interminable wait, another fanfare, more cheers, with the Ali and Foreman partisans competing. Instructions were given by referee Clayton, and the stage was set.

In rounds one and two, this writer had Foreman eking out a narrow advantage. In the first round, it was very fast action for heavyweights, with Ali attempting to slide away from Foreman as the champion took repeated left jabs to the face in order to get inside the twisting, sliding Ali, who speared George with smoking left jabs but rarely used his right and seemed content to allow George the opportunity to whale away to his body.

Most of the writers in Kinshasa, regardless of their thoughts on the outcome of the bout, felt that the fight would be a case of Ali, up on his toes, ever dancing away, sticking and moving, stinging like a bee, and running like a gazelle.

On the other hand, the fight shaped up as one in which Foreman would be the devastating puncher and the scales of age might well decide the winner with Foreman at age 26 and Ali at 32, and Ali having a 1½-inch reach advantage to be contended with. The odds ended up 3-1 in Foreman's favor.

The consensus was that Ali would slow down after five rounds or so of body-punching by Foreman and then would be caught up with and quickly destroyed. It was felt that if Ali could continue to stay away from Foreman, then the longer the fight progressed the challenger would be gaining ground since Foreman had gone only three rounds in his two previous title defenses, a one-round knockout over Jose Roman in Tokyo in 1973 and his two-round icing of Ken Norton in Caracas earlier this year.

Angelo Dundee had confided to a few that his plan was not to have Ali run, but to have him use the ropes, slide along them,

When they met at center ring to start the fight, Ali weighed a trim 216½, looking in the best shape he had been in since he came back to boxing in 1970.

THE RING RATINGS, January 1975

Carlos Monzon

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Muhammad Ali, Chicago, IL
1. **George Foreman**, Hayward, CA
2. **Joe Frazier**, Philadelphia, PA
3. **Ron Lyle**, Denver, CO
4. **Oscar Bonavena**, Argentina
5. **Joe Bugner**, England
6. **Ken Norton**, San Diego, CA
7. **Jerry Quarry**, Los Angeles, CA
8. **Chuck Wepner**, Bayonne, NJ
9. **Henry Clark**, San Francisco, CA
10. **Larry Middleton**, Baltimore, MD

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **John Conteh**, England
2. **Len Hutchins**, Detroit, MI
3. **Victor Galindez**, Argentina
4. **Jorge Ahumada**, Argentina
5. **Tom Boggs**, Denmark
6. **Karl Heinz Klein**, Germany
7. **Avenamar Peralta**, Argentina
8. **Richie Kates**, Philadelphia, PA
9. **Alvaro Lopez**, Stockton, CA
10. **Maxie Smith**, England

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Carlos Monzon, Argentina
1. **Rodrigo Valdes**, Colombia
2. **Tony Licata**, New Orleans, LA
3. **Gratien Tonna**, France
4. **Emile Griffith**, New York, NY
5. **Tony Mundine**, Australia
6. **Bennie Briscoe**, Philadelphia, PA
7. **Kevin Finnegan**, England
8. **George Cooper**, Oakland, CA
9. **Vito Antuofermo**, Brooklyn, NY
10. **Willie Monroe**, Philadelphia, PA

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Oscar Alvarado, Uvalde, TX
1. **Elisha Obed**, Bahamas
2. **Jose Duran**, Spain
3. **Koichi Wajima**, Japan
4. **Miguel de Oliviera**, Brazil
5. **Miguel Angel Camanino**, Argentina
6. **Eckhard Dagge**, Germany
7. **Larry Paul**, England
8. **Charkey Ramon**, Australia
9. **Donato Paduano**, Canada
10. **Miguel Castellini**, Argentina

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Jose Napoles, Mexico
1. **Clyde Gray**, Canada
2. **Angel Espada**, Puerto Rico
3. **Fausto Rodriguez**, Dominican Republic
4. **John Stracey**, England
5. **Rocky Mattioli**, Australia
6. **Hedgemon Lewis**, Detroit, MI
7. **Johnny Gant**, Washington, D.C.
8. **Armando Muniz**, Los Angeles, CA
9. **Eddie Perkins**, Chicago, IL
10. **Sandy Torres**, Puerto Rico

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Antonio Cervantes, Colombia
1. **Hector Thompson**, Australia
2. **Esteban DeJesus**, Puerto Rico
3. **Pedro Fernandez**, Spain
4. **Tony Petronelli**, Taunton, MA
5. **Toni Ortiz**, Spain
6. **Leoncio Ortiz**, Mexico
7. **Monroe Brooks**, Los Angeles, CA
8. **Brooks Byrd**, Clovis, NM
9. **Miguel Barreto**, Puerto Rico
10. **Laudial Negron**, Puerto Rico

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Roberto Duran, Panama
1. **Ray Lampkin**, Portland, OR
2. **Angel Mayoral**, Las Vegas, NV
3. **Ken Buchanan**, Scotland
4. **Rudy Barro**, Philippines
5. **Hugo Gutierrez**, Argentina
6. **Ishimatsu Suzuki**, Japan
7. **Arturo Pineda**, Mexico
8. **Ray Lunny III**, San Francisco, CA
9. **Miguel Mayan**, San Diego, CA
10. **Hugo Barraza**, Colombia

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Ben Villaflor, Philippines
1. **Kuniaki Shibata**, Japan
2. **Sven-Erik Paulsen**, Norway
3. **Alfredo Escalera**, Puerto Rico
4. **Tyrone Everett**, Philadelphia, PA
5. **Lothar Abend**, Germany
6. **Victor Echagaray**, Argentina
7. **Jean-Baptiste Piedache**, France
8. **Apollo Yoshio**, Japan
9. **Jose Fernandez**, New York, NY
10. **Samuel Serrano**, Puerto Rico

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Bobby Chacon**, Los Angeles, CA
2. **Ruben Olivares**, Mexico
3. **Lionel Hernandez**, Venezuela
4. **Alfredo Marcano**, Venezuela
5. **Eder Jofre**, Brazil
6. **Alexis Arguello**, Nicaragua
7. **Art Hafey**, Canada
8. **Shig Fukuyama**, Japan
9. **Antonio (Gitano) Jiminez**, Spain
10. **Royal Kobayashi**, Japan

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Soo Hwan Hong, Korea
1. **Rafael Herrera**, Mexico
2. **Benico Sosa**, Argentina
3. **Rodolfo Martinez**, Mexico
4. **Romeo Anaya**, Mexico
5. **Arnold Taylor**, South Africa
6. **Jose Casas**, Argentina
7. **Francisco Villegas**, Puerto Rico
8. **David Vasquez**, New York, NY
9. **Alfonso Zamora**, Mexico
10. **Jose Luis Soto**, Mexico

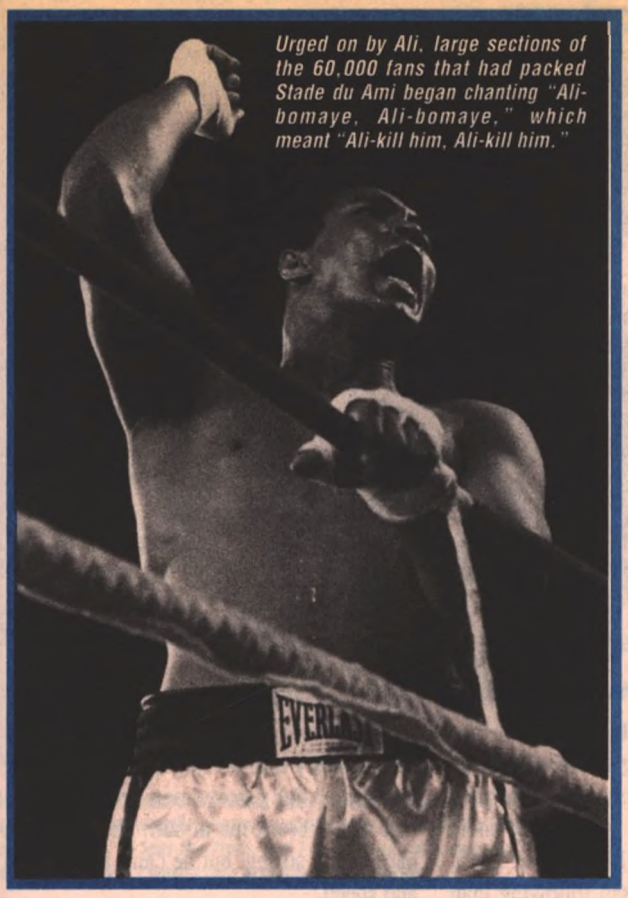
FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Miguel Canto**, Mexico
2. **Vicente Pool**, Mexico
3. **Thanomjit Sukothai**, Thailand
4. **Shoji Oguma**, Japan
5. **Betulio Gonzalez**, Venezuela
6. **Susumu Hanagata**, Japan
7. **Erbito Salvarria**, Philippines
8. **Cecil Escobido**, Philippines
9. **Fernando Cabanela**, Philippines
10. **Big Jim West**, Australia

moving just enough to avoid taking too much punishment, allowing Foreman to tire himself out.

The obvious danger to such a plan was that Foreman would use the good left jab that he exhibited in training and then pin Ali, not allowing the sliding movement until Muhammad was blasted out of the 20th of May Stadium that holds about 80,000 when sandwiched in like the New York subway at rush hour.

This night all the seats were occupied, but the $180 ringside seats that were located in the grandstand. There were about 62,000 hardy souls who paid to see the fight. They had erected an 80-foot roof to house us and television in case of rain. It was good they did have this foresight because the rain came down in sheets at one brief period during the night. Those fans in the stands seemed to take it with good humor.

The Dundee entourage plan almost backfired, as it looked bad for Ali in those



Urged on by Ali, large sections of the 60,000 fans that had packed Stade du Ami began chanting "Ali-bomaye, Ali-bomaye," which meant "Ali-kill him, Ali-kill him."

first two rounds. However, in the third session Foreman leaped across the 19-foot ring, only to meet an Ali throwing leather as though his life depended upon it.

Foreman, for one of the few times in the contest, used his left jab, but was outpunched two to one as Ali moved from side to side. Foreman worked on Ali's body, then changed direction, banging to Ali's head, but it was the challenger who scored more efficiently in this round.

Both fighters had words to say. Foreman was on the receiving end of Ali's sharp tongue. "Come on, boy, show me something." Foreman returned the taunt through a face that was beginning to swell on the left cheekbone. He had an abrasion on his forehead, and eyes that already had a tired look in them.

Ali's left jabs were his margin, and the fight was becoming a closer affair.

In the later rounds and right up to the knockout, Ali's cornermen, Drew "Bundini" Brown, Dundee, and, at ringside, Ali's own brother, were not as confident of victory as they later maintained in the dressing room after the fight. Ali's brother was calling Foreman an amateur and beseeching his brother to outbox George and "knock him out, show him who's boss, box him, get going."

Dundee seemed perturbed and disgusted by the turn of events, which to most at ringside looked as though both men were getting tired. Despite showboating to indicate that he was in no danger, Ali seemed in very real danger of losing the bout due to Foreman's devastating bodypunching.

As later events indicated, it was Foreman who was apparently the more tired. He lost steam in his punches and became an open target in the eighth round, a turn of events that spewed forth a flurry of Ali punches that decided the situation, ending all speculation.

This fight was a slugfest, a real pier-six bangaroo, and one of the better heavyweight title fights from the standpoint of action.

The entire fight followed the same pattern. At the bell, Foreman would rush across the ring and meet Ali coming out of his corner and attempt to crowd him into the ropes or a corner where he would mainly bang away to Ali's body, with occasional jabs or hooks to the challenger's jaw. Ali, in turn, would seem to be taking all Foreman could deliver, and although he looked tired, he never did go down.

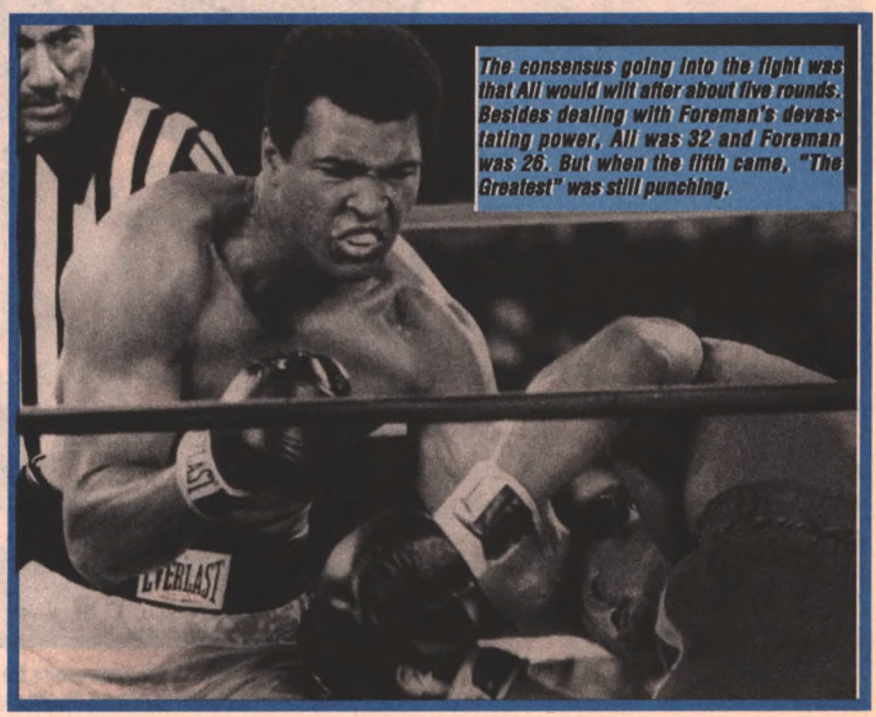
As the fight went into the deciding eighth round, the writer had the score in rounds four to three in favor of Foreman. This is now academic since the knockout was the convincer and erased any doubt as to the winner.

After the fight at which some 200-plus scribes from all over the world gathered, Foreman stated, "Did I tire? I was never tired." To these eyes, he did look tired. Foreman, however, showed that he had class in his immediate postfight remarks to the scribes.

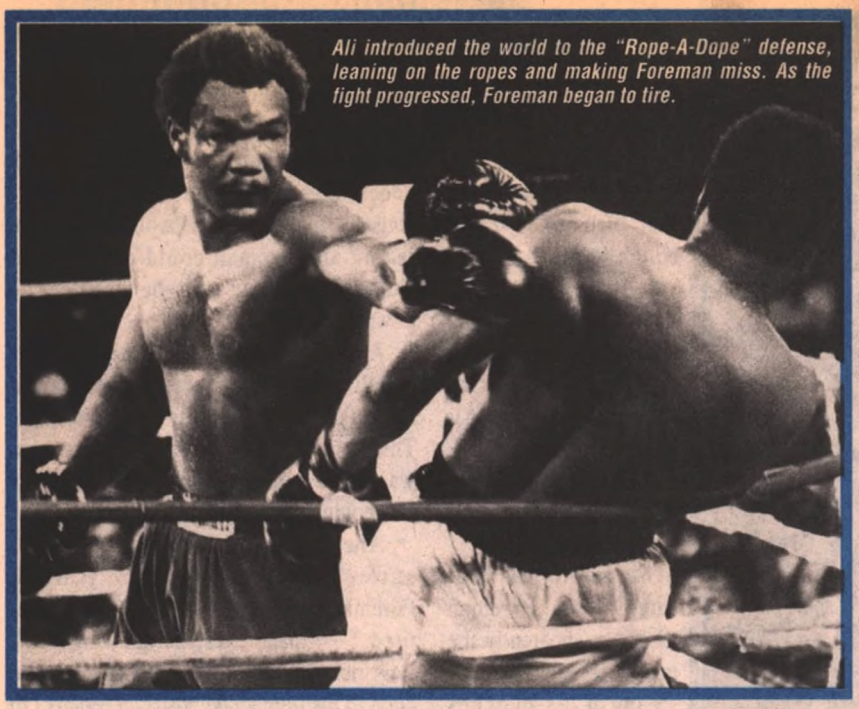
"Ali is a fine gentleman, he loves his children, wife, and country. He has a great love for his people and a desire to help them. Ali is responsible for bridging the black man from America to Africa. This is a bridge that will never be broken."

Stretched on the rubbing table, tired, with his face swollen, the ex-champion answered questions tossed at him and waxed philosophical.

"I will stay in Africa and travel for



The consensus going into the fight was that Ali would wilt after about five rounds. Besides dealing with Foreman's devastating power, Ali was 32 and Foreman was 26. But when the fifth came, "The Greatest" was still punching.



Ali introduced the world to the "Rope-A-Dope" defense, leaning on the ropes and making Foreman miss. As the fight progressed, Foreman began to tire.

some time. I would like to strengthen the bridge of blacks. I love America and I think blacks and whites must come together. My mother and father had their origins here and I would like to see them come back some time."

A writer asked Foreman if he would fight Ali the same way if he had the another opportunity.

"For the first time I felt secure in a fight and I felt I was winning right up to the end. I followed Dick's [Sadler, his trainer] instructions, but next time I will follow them, if there is a next time, even more closely. Ali won the fight, and I have no beefs. A champion should never alibi. I lost the fight, but I don't feel I was beaten. Yes, I would like another chance at Ali. That's up to him. I think he has said some bad things about me but, basically, I do not have anything against him."

Asked the usual question as to how he felt about losing the fight, George gave us his peculiar smile that denotes patience. "How do I feel about losing? No loser feels good, but I know I did my best."

Of course, as the drum thumps prepare the way for a return engagement, many weird statements will be used for publicity purposes.

The usually loquacious Ali sat in his dressing room, which was the scene of pandemonium such as I have never witnessed before at any fight. Not only inside the room were photographers fighting reporters for the space close to the champ, but in the hall was a long stream of people, some having no connection with boxing but wanting to catch a glimpse of their hero or possibly touch him. Never has a fighter had a more partisan following than Ali in Zaire. That he is the hero of his people there is no doubt. Even when losing, in those rounds when things looked bleak, his people chanted for him and they were the greater number in the arena.

"Ali—kill him, Ali—kill him!" There seemed no doubt that he would do just that for his pride, for his people, and for money. Ali did just that. He ended the life of Foreman, for the time being, as a champion.

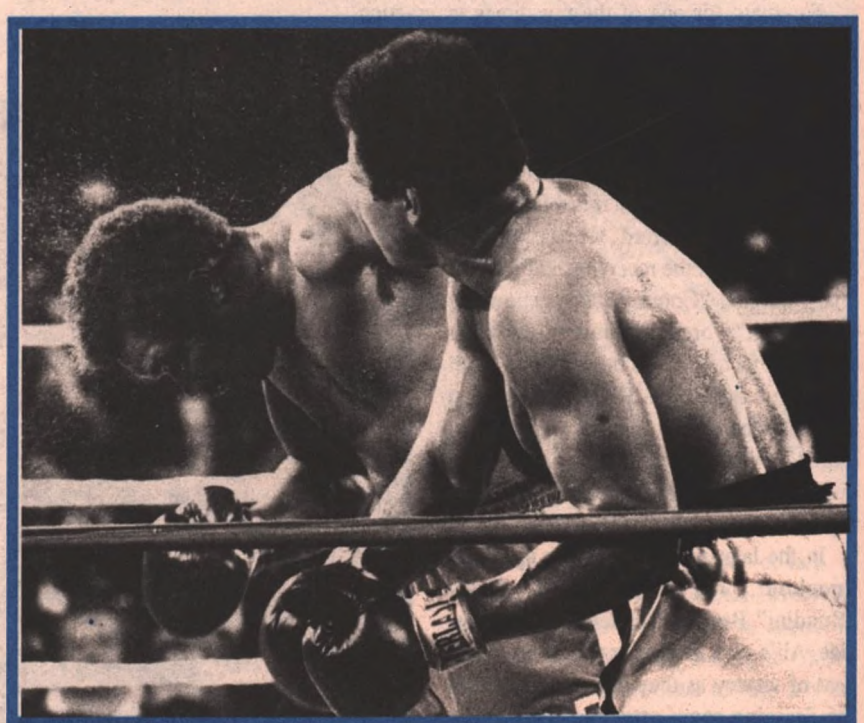
Facing his questioners, Ali took over before any questions could be asked of him.

"Allah was in the ring tonight, not Ali. I'm not supposed to have a punch, remember? Allah was in that arena and did what had to be done. Now I'm going to spread Allah—to go into the ministry if Elijah Muhammad [the leader of his cult] agrees."

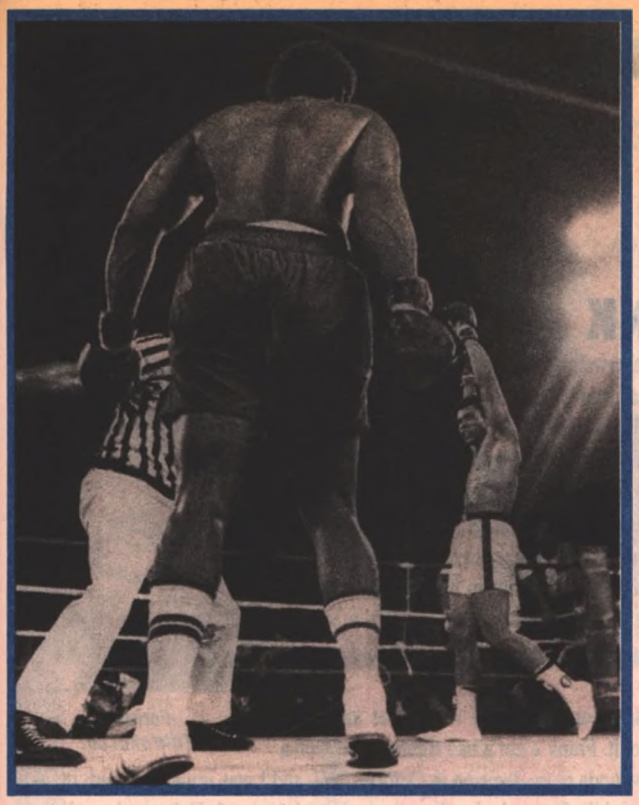
Asked if he followed any plan, the new champion replied: "I did what I said I would do. I jabbed him in the corners and let him tire himself out. I waited my chance, and then pow! Ali is the greatest!

"You remember Foreman was never to be beaten by me, he was unbeatable, a big fearsome, dangerous man with a punch that would break me in half. He can punch hard and is strong, but he can't handle jabs and speed.

"Joe Frazier is a better fighter and more dangerous. In close, Frazier really can hurt a man. In close, George doesn't know what to do. If you can move, then George



Ali's big right marks the end for Foreman in the eighth. A left hook by Ali preceded the blow, stunning the champion and setting him up for the payoff punch.



A triumphant Ali raises his arms after becoming only the second man to regain the heavyweight championship, with a wobbly Foreman looking on dejectedly. "I lost the fight, but I don't feel I was beaten," Foreman said afterward. "I would like another chance at Ali."

doesn't seem to be able to hit hard."

As Ali came into the dressing room from a more secluded back room, few of those present were surprised to hear boxing's super salesman ask those present if Foreman was still one of the greatest of all-time. The brothers all answered "no!" as if on cue.

Sitting there, an obviously very tired man with his right eye blood shot, Ali was otherwise unmarked in contrast with the punch-marked face of the ex-champion. He never lost his sense of humor as he referred to his standing as compared to Foreman.

"Foreman will now be called a bum, he will no longer be one of the greatest, one of the hardest hitters of all-times."

Will he give Foreman a return fight?

"It's too early to talk about that," Ali continued. "If anyone wants me to talk about fighting, let them come up with $10-million. If I decide to retire, I won't for at least six months. I don't want my name out of THE RING magazine as the champion. I want to enjoy it for a while."

I had been told earlier by Angelo Dundee that if Ali won he would not retire. Obviously, the money must be good to keep the champ in the showcase.

We asked Hank Schwartz, vice president of Video Techniques, who fed the fight into theaters and had a lot to do with putting it together, if he was interested in a return fight.

"It's too soon to say," said Schwartz. "Could be."

Would he hold a second fight in Zaire?

"Why not, it has been good to boxing and to me, certainly financially. Right now, I'd like to go fishing." ■

The Cover: Muhammad Ali shocked the world with his stunning eighth-round knockout upset of an opponent many believed was unbeatable in George Foreman. Deploying his famed "Rope-A-Dope" tactics, Ali lured Foreman into a trap. Foreman eventually punched himself out, leaving Ali to score one of the biggest victories of his career.

Foster Home: Light heavyweight champ Bob Foster retired (temporarily) from the ring after defending the title 14 times. At the time, many viewed Foster as possibly the greatest light heavy champ of all-time. Foster decided to retire after a fight with Argentine Jorge Ahumada resulted in a draw, which experts thought was a big courtesy to the champion.

Moving Toward A Title: John Conteh made a strong bid to fill the void atop the light heavy division left vacant by the retirement of Foster with a decisive 15-round victory over Ahumada, who gave Foster trouble in the champ's last fight before he announced his retirement.

The Taub Trilogy: Longtime fight broadcaster Sam Taub reflects on promoter Tex Rickard in the final installment of a three-part series of Taub's recollections of ringside. Taub felt Rickard was by far the best promoter in boxing.

Fighter Of The Month: Was there a doubt? No, not really. Muhammad Ali made a strong statement toward greatness by knocking out George Foreman in Zaire. With the victory, Ali became only the second man in heavyweight history to regain the title, joining Floyd Patterson.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

FORREST GETS FRANK

Forrest: Title shot set

There are those who would refer to undefeated welterweight **Vernon Forrest** as the number-one wasted talent in boxing, but it's not his fault. He may simply be the most avoided fighter in the game. It only makes sense; if you were **Oscar De La Hoya** or **Felix Trinidad** or **Ike Quartey** or anyone else who's held a welterweight title in the past few years, would you put it on the line against someone with no market value, no glaring weaknesses, and legitimate knockout power?

But Forrest, 31-0 (25), has continued to plug along, finally making his HBO debut in his eighth year as a pro, and now finally getting his long-overdue title shot on August 26. Unfortunately, it's neither a huge money fight nor a fight that will gain him much additional respect, as his opponent for the vacant IBF title is **Raul Frank**, 23-3-1 (12), a virtual unknown from **Don King's** stable whose number-one IBF rating is hardly reflective of what he's done in the ring.

"I'd love to be able to beat a more proven champion, in a fight with more money at stake," Forrest said, "but I'll take it any way I can get it. Frank's not a bad fighter. I've seen a tape of his fight with **Purcell Miller** [which Frank won via close decision in October '97], and I was impressed with the way he dug down. He outlasted Miller and showed a lot of skill. He worked well to the body and the head. He's tough, so I'm not going in expecting a knockout. I just expect to win the title, however it comes."

After that, Forrest's dream match is a shot at the winner of the De La Hoya-**Shane Mosley** fight, and if that can't be arranged, a unification with WBA champ **James Page**. Forrest and Page were seen engaged in a verbal altercation right in front of the press section at the **Lennox Lewis-Michael Grant** fight, though Forrest says it was nothing serious.

"He said his mom was a better cook than my mom, so I said that my mom was a better cook than his mom," Forrest said. "From my perspective, it was nothing. Beating James Page, to me, is nothing. It would be easy to win his belt. But I'm not really fighting for titles. I'm fighting for the Hall of Fame. So whoever is out there that's considered the best, that's who I want."

LISTEN UP

Robinson: Must-win vs. Harris

It was virtually a done deal as we went to press that featherweight king **Naseem Hamed's** August 19 HBO opponent would be **Augie Sanchez**. "Kid Vegas" has improved drastically since his shocking one-round knockout loss to journeyman **Edgar Garcia** in April '98, but this still has all the makings of a quick blowout win for "The Prince." Look for an excellent matchup between **Antonio Diaz** and **Micky Ward** in the co-feature ... WBA super welterweight champ Felix Trinidad recently inked a five-fight deal with HBO, including two pay-per-view fights. Obviously, with Showtime's doors open now to promoters other than Don King, the reverse is also true, and King's fighters are free to take their business across the street ... An excellent lightweight matchup is coming to ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* on August 11, when always-entertaining **Ivan Robinson**, coming off a tough loss to Antonio Diaz, tries to get back on track against talented **Vivian Harris**. HBO has expressed interest in a Robinson-**Paul Spadafora** bout if "Mighty Ivan" comes through against Harris ... The repeatedly postponed **Omar Sheika-Joe Calzaghe** super middleweight battle is back on for August 12 in London—assuming Calzaghe can shake the injury bug that has been hounding him the last couple of years. Though he's by far the less exciting of the two fighters, a healthy Calzaghe has to be the favorite, especially given the difficulty Sheika had last time out against **Glen Johnson** ... Also rescheduled for that August 12 date is the postponed WBA cruiserweight title fight between champion **Fabrice Tiozzo** and mandatory challenger **Virgil Hill**, in Cannes, France. Even though Hill handed Tiozzo his only loss in their first encounter, "Quicksilver" has slipped significantly in the seven years since, and Las Vegas handicapper **Herb Lambeck** makes him a 6-1 underdog ... HBO is looking to bring heavyweight slugger **Cliff "The Black Rhino" Etienne** back to *KO Nation* on September 9, possibly against fellow unbeaten prospect **Fres Oquendo**. **Derrick Jefferson** may box in the co-feature, building toward an all-action battle with Etienne a little farther down the road. That sounds like a *Boxing After Dark* fight if ever there was one. ■

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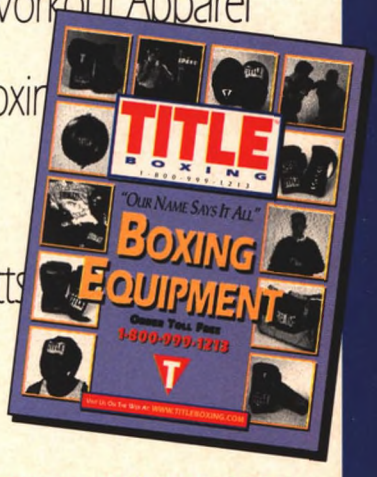

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